

GOLF

Jordan Spieth

player OF THE YEAR

WHAT DRIVES
THE TWO-TIME
MAJOR WINNER

And How You Can
Make Birdies the
Jordan Way

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**HAPPY
NEW YOU!**

Be Stronger,
Longer &
Clutch!

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KEYS**

(to bomb it
like Rory)

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JORDAN SPIETH



BUBBA WATSON

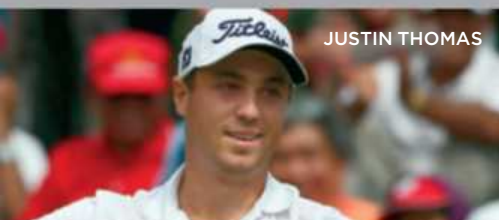
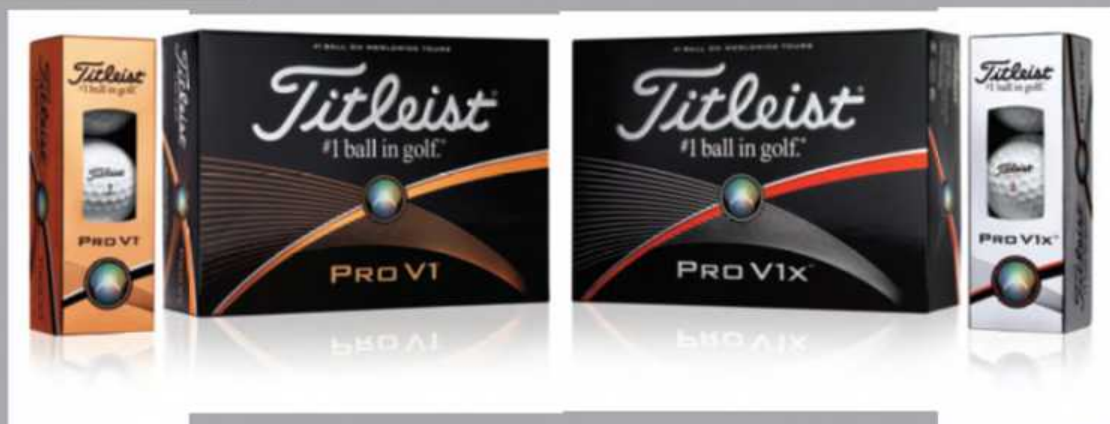


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Jordan Spieth

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

No one saw Jordan Spieth's historic 2015 coming. We can't wait to see what the young legend will do for an encore.

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At just 22, the two-time major winner is just getting started.

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Caddie Michael Greller and Spieth are a marquee partnership.

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A constellation of key players make up the superstar's universe.

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Why does this polite young man play as if his soul is on fire?

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His year in numbers was, yes, off the charts.

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Try looking at the hole when you putt, like Jordan often does.

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Five ways to Spieth-like dominance on the greens.



COVER PHOTO: ANGUS MURRAY

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David M. Clarke, Editor

A WINNER AT MUCH MORE THAN GOLF

» **THE OTHER DAY** I came across a definition of the qualities needed to be a leader. It struck me that every one of them is what propelled Jordan Spieth to world No. 1 in 2015, and to GOLF Magazine's Player of the Year. Curiosity, insight, resilience, and engagement—these core attributes have driven Jordan to the highest level of the game.

As writer John McAlley reveals in "The Hunger Game," on p. 76, Spieth's curiosity and insight were evident very early on. In 2002, golf instructor Joey Anders was just a month or two into his job at Brookhaven Country Club in Dallas when Spieth's father arranged lessons for his 8-year-old son. Anders remembers those first sessions with Jordan and the many questions that the youngster asked. "He would want to know how to get different ball flights," Anders recalls. "He'd want to know why things happened. At one point I said to him, 'If you want to hit a draw, you've got to hit it a little bit flatter and more inside out,' and he turned to his dad and said, 'I told you I need to swing flatter.'" Again, the boy was 8.

Anyone who watched Spieth tough out the stressful final few holes of the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay last year knows about his resilience. His second straight major victory of the year seemed ensured after a bending, 25-foot birdie putt on No. 16 put him in front by three strokes. But then a crushing double bogey on the 17th opened the door for Dustin Johnson, who was playing just a hole behind. Michael Geller, Spieth's



HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE HEARD JORDAN USE "WE" RATHER THAN "I" TO EXPLAIN HIS SUCCESS? THAT GENEROSITY IS RARE IN AN EGO-DRIVEN SPORT.

caddie, thinks that the next two shots—the blistering drive on 18 and then an all-world 3-wood into the green—were his boss's most clutch of the year.

The Geller-Spieth relationship—which the looper discusses starting on p. 68—has to rank right up there as one of the most effective player-caddie partnerships of modern times. How often have we heard Jordan use "we" rather than "I" to explain his extraordinary success, and to share credit with Geller and every other member of Team Spieth? That kind of generosity and engagement is pretty rare in a highly ego-driven sport like professional golf, but it epitomizes our Player of the Year, who is a leader among golfers now—and will almost certainly be one for years to come.

Go Jordan!

David M. Clarke, Editor

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Now on the Tee: Your Raves, Rants and Reactions



WHICH NOVEMBER STORIES AND COLUMNS DREW THE MOST LETTERS?

Jason Day	23%
Rules Guy	15%
Mediocre Golf Association	13%
Other	49%



BAD COMPANY

» **IT WAS** with great amusement that I read your article on the Mediocre Golf Association (“Face It: We Suck,” November 2015). I found Jon Morley’s insight that there is no secret to golf, that instead it’s all about changing our attitude (“a cheerful embrace of mediocrity”), to be quite compelling. After all, we’re mesmerized by watching how effortlessly the pros play and score. It reminded me of my definition of golf: It exposes every facet of the human character. It is more than just a game. Golf is the tapestry of life played out on the spectacular landscape of our creator. To play golf is to be mystically drawn back for another day in search of an elusive triumph.

—CHARLIE F., RICHMOND, VA

The Mediocre Golf Association is a clever antidote for suffering golfers like me who find the game maddening. But I hope the idea doesn't catch on. It wouldn't be much fun playing behind four guys who find enjoyment in their mediocrity. —RICHARD BROWN, BABYLON, N.Y.

“CLUB” MED

» **WHAT A JOY** it is to be a member of GOLF’s “club.” While I was reading the last issue, I said to myself, “I cannot believe how good this is!” Everything flowed so smoothly, and I really was sorry when I finished the issue. All the articles on Jason Day, Jordan Speith, Jimmy Walker, Troy Merritt and Patrick Rodgers were interesting and informative. This is an issue I will save for sure, and now I can’t wait to receive the next one. Keep up the great work.

—JAMES HENRY, VIA E-MAIL

THAT ANSWER WAS BUNK

» **I DO NOT AGREE** with the Rules Guy’s assertion that rakes should be left outside the bunker (“Rules Guy,” November 2015). The best place for a rake is *in* the bunker. Why? Because leaving a rake in the grass allows it to interfere with balls that are *not* hit at the hazard.

—JOHN DURAND, VIA E-MAIL

A G'DAY FOR JASON

» **WOW! WHAT A POWERFUL** story of love, sacrifice and perseverance (“Jason’s Greatest Save,” November 2015). Maybe it was somewhat prophetic that the Day family’s first car was a Daewoo Nubira. The story goes that then Daewoo chairman Kim Woo Choong named the car “Nubira” for a Korean idiom that means “go all over the world,” in order to inspire his company to expand internationally and conquer the car market. From Beaudesert in Queensland to international fame, Day has done just that. Nubira, Jason!

—JAMES J. KIM, OAKLAND, CA

» **MY FASHION-CONSCIOUS** granddaughter does not play golf, but she watches golf tournaments on TV because “they dress so well.” Not so your November cover of Jason Day dressed in an undershirt!

—GLEN TYLER, EASTERN SHORE, VA.



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

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Letters are edited for clarity and brevity.



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**HOLLYWOOD
ENDING AWARD**
As the credits rolled
at the Players, Rickie
raised the trophy
and kissed the girl.

TEERING OFF

1 of 3

These last 12 months have filled us with awe, joy, shock and fear—and we're just talking about Michelle Wie's rainbow hair. Behold our highly subjective rearview glimpse at 2015.

BY JOSH SENS

RIGHT: DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES; FAR RIGHT: AP PHOTO/JON SUPER; BOTTOM: STUART FRANKLIN/GETTY IMAGES

The Year in



SHOT OF THE YEAR

Fresh off a double-bogey that seemed to doom his U.S. Open chances, **Jordan Spieth** whistled this 284-yard 3-wood approach on the 72nd hole at Chambers Bay, setting up the birdie that secured his second major.

MOST PSYCHEDELIC 'DO



Older fans surely thought they were having an acid flashback, but this was no hallucination. **Michelle Wie** showed up at the Evian Championship as the girl with kaleidoscope hair.

LEFT: ROSS KINNAIRD/GETTY IMAGES; TOP: DAVID ROSENBLUM/CON SPORT SWIRE



WORST DR. OZ IMPRESSION (PART 1)
 "A bone kinda popped out...but I put it back in," Tiger said of this Augusta injury, which sounded both painful and implausible.



THE GO-FOR-THE-'JUG'ULAR AWARD
 Behind his Opie exterior, Zach is a coldhearted closer, as his birdie-birdie start in the British playoff proved.

GOLF Awards





"MIND IF I PLAY THROUGH?" AWARD
The lie was friendly and so were the fans when Matt Jones veered off course at Whistling Straits. It was, after all, the hospitality tent.

TEERING OFF

2 of 3

THE AVERT-YOUR-EYES AWARD

Tiger Woods's recurring battle with the yips became so wince-inducing that even Woods himself had to look away.



MOST ORNERY ICON

Irked at how the PGA handled the dismissal of his pal Ted Bishop, **Tom Watson** told the organization he didn't want to join its Hall of Fame—and to stop playing ball in his yard!

BEST SHOW OF SPORTSMANSHIP

In a rivalry built on respect, not rancor, a gracious **Spiehl** gave constant props to **Jason Day**, who stared him down on Sunday at the PGA Championship.

SADDEST VICTORY MEAL

After a Champagne-soaking at the British Masters, 21-year-old winner **Matthew Fitzpatrick** celebrated with a meal at...Subway.



LEFT: JAMIE SQUIRE/GETTY IMAGES; TOP: ROBERT BECK/USA TODAY SPORTS; FAR RIGHT: @KORYMCILROY

RIGHT: ALEX MORTON/ACTON IMAGES VIA ZUMA



AIN'T-THAT-A-KICK-IN-THE-HEAD AWARD

Rory McIlroy wrecked his ankle playing pickup soccer, booting his chance to defend his British Open crown.





TEERING OFF

3 of 3



Worst Dr. Oz Impression (Part 2)

The only thing more dizzying than **Day's** bout of vertigo at the U.S. Open was **Greg Norman's** muddled attempt to explain the condition—and to pronounce “otolith.”

Oldest Dog, Newest Trick

Davis Love III, 51, became the third-oldest Tour winner ever, at the Wyndham Championship. The '16 Ryder Cup skipper will have a tough call: whether or not to pick himself for Team USA.

Inaugural Bryson DeChambeau Award...

...goes to (drumroll) **Bryson DeChambeau!** This award salutes anyone with a super-cool name and homemade swing who became the fifth player to win the U.S. Amateur and NCAA individual crown in the same year.



LEFT: KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES; TOP: HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES; NORMAN INSET: DAVID CANNON/GETTY IMAGES

RIGHT: MIKE EHLMANN/GETTY IMAGES; FAR RIGHT: PHILIPPE MILLEREAU/KMSP/DPP/ICON; BOTTOM: USGA/CHRIS KEANE

**UGLIEST PUTT
UNDER PRESSURE**
Dustin Johnson's
three-jack from 12 feet
cost him the U.S. Open,
proving yet again that
you can't spell "dejected"
without a "D" and a "J."



YOUTH-IS-SERVED AWARD
Lydia Ko, 18, won the Evian
Championship, in eastern
France, to become the youngest
female major winner ever. She
was free to celebrate in style—
France's drinking age is 18.



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EYE TO EYE

Finding a New Gear

» Congratulations on winning PGA Tour Rookie of the Year honors. You beat a stacked field of talented players, like Justin Thomas and Tony Finau. Were you surprised you got the nod?

I don't think so. I played well enough—two runner-ups and a bunch of top 10s. From where I was in the beginning of the year to where I was at the end, I made a really big leap in performance. All the young guys and rookies played so well that you had to stand out to be mentioned.

What are your goals as you head into 2016?

Winning is at the top of my list. Once you win, you've made it. That's what you're [on Tour] to do. It's just hard. Every single week, there are 130 guys good enough to win out here. You have to bring your A-game, and you have to be prepared.

Your runner-up finishes came at the Honda Classic, which you lost in a playoff, and the BMW Championship. What did those close calls teach you?

How will car-crazy **DANIEL BERGER**, 22, reward himself for winning Rookie of the Year? With the perfect drive, of course.

INTERVIEW BY SEAN ZAK

Portrait by
SIMON BRUTY

EYE TO EYE Daniel Berger

Looking back at the Honda, I didn't play that well during the week, but I finished it off with a good final round. I might have learned more about myself, my game and my abilities [by losing]. That may make me better when the major championships come around. The nerves I felt there were nerves I'd never felt my entire life. Next time, I'll be prepared.

You turn 23 on Thursday at the Masters, where you'll go after the green jacket for the first time. Not a bad way to spend your birthday.

To be there with my family, and on my birthday—it will be unbelievable. I've never been there, but I've played it on the Tiger Woods PGA Tour video game. That's the pinnacle: the Masters. Everyone wants to be a part of it.

Your dad, Jay, was a pro tennis player. What's the best advice he's given you? He always said, "You're either going to be good at school or at sports." He let me decide. I believe that if I wanted to be a doctor, I could have done it, but that's not what got me going in the morning. I woke up each day and couldn't wait to hit balls. He told me that when he was younger, he would practice five to six hours a day—so I told myself I would practice for *eight* hours a day. That's how I was brought up.

After two runner-up finishes in his debut season, Berger looks ready to win in 2016.



At 14, you beat Steve Marino, already a pro, in a match at the Dye Preserve in Jupiter, Fla., where you worked and where Steve is a member. Is that when you knew you had game?

I was a cocky young kid. Marino would be the first one to say that. When I was 13, we'd putt for \$500 when I didn't even have \$15 in my pocket. I think that was good in the long run. Now that we play for millions of dollars, I'm able to control my emotions and only focus on the goal at hand.

You won Florida's Dixie Amateur by 13 strokes when you were just 19. When you're "on," are you as good as anyone on Tour?

When I'm playing well, I'm tough to beat. I've got distance, and I putt it well and chip it well. It's about getting consistent. I haven't been

playing golf that long—only 10 years. As time goes on, I think I'll keep getting better.

Winning by 13 strokes sounds like an in-the-zone experience. What does that feel like?

It feels like the game is just... easy. I don't even know what happened. I didn't come into that week playing that well. I just got one good day of confidence and rode it out through the rest of the week. That was definitely the highlight of my amateur career.

You're a car guy, right?

Yeah, when I first turned pro, I bought a [Chevy] Tahoe and put 26-inch rims on it. I went through that phase of having big rims and huge speakers in the back, annoying everyone on the street [laughs].

You banked more than \$3 million in 2015—you can get more extravagant than a Tahoe now.

When I made some money, I got a BMW M4. That same week, I played well at the Honda Classic, so I was thinking, *Hey, maybe this is a thing—play good, buy yourself something nice and keep playing good.*

And didn't you add a red '69 Camaro to your garage?

I was thinking at the Tour Championship [Berger, the only rookie in the field, tied for 12th] that I'd like to get something ridiculous, a Lamborghini or a Bentley. But I found a classic-car museum in Atlanta and saw the Camaro. I got it a week later and have been driving it ever since. I looked at it and just knew it was the one. **G**

ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE

» THERE'S AN ART TO DRIVING THE RANGE-PICKER.

For three years, I drove the range-picker [at the Dye Preserve]. I came up with my own technique. Pretty simple. You start with a big lap around the entire range, then circle inward. I'm a perfectionist, so when I'd miss a ball, I'd whip the picker around to grab it. And I clean-picked it. No balls left!

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SHORT SHOTS

BUTCH, IT'S NOT YOU. IT'S ME.

Phil Mickelson's breakup with **Butch Harmon** will be great for Lefty. He's always been a golf savant and is easily bored, so some fresh swing ideas might be the stimulant the 45-year-old needs for one final flourish.



ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

RORY'S RECKONING

This is a crucial season for **Rory McIlroy**. For most of 2015 he looked bored and distracted, while Spieth, Day and Fowler played with real hunger. Does Rory still want it? We'll find out.

GOLF AND THE GAMES

It's time to start counting down to the Olympics in Rio. The **60-person fields** (one for men, one for women) will be pegged to the World Golf Ranking. Here in the U.S., there seems to be precious little focus on golf's Olympic return. But for international players (and fans and golf federations), this is a huge deal.

Maui? Zowie!

There's no place on Tour like the season opener at Kapalua, in Hawaii—home to feuds, fun and A-list hookups

» **THE PGA** Tour has tried hard to sell its new wrap-around schedule, but I think I speak for most of us when I say that Kapalua will always feel like the real start of the Tour year. The telecast is the ultimate golf porn, especially for January snowbirds: whales breaching, surfers shredding, and endless views of the Plantation Course, one of the most visually arresting tracks on the planet.

For those players in the winners-only field, Kapalua is a treasured working vacation. For reporters, it's one of the best weeks of the year, and not just for the fun and sun. Kapalua is great because it's so cloistered: Players and scribes alike stay at the same Ritz-Carlton, eat in the same restaurants and frolic at the same pool. It turns us media types into anthropologists, studying an exotic species in its natural environment. This kind of observational reporting is priceless.

Years ago, while staying at a swank resort in Barbados, I beheld a truly unforgettable sight: Miguel Ángel Jiménez prowling the beach with a huge, phallic cigar in his mouth and wearing only a porkpie hat and a black Speedo. The image will haunt me to the grave. That kind of revealing moment happens all the time at Kapalua, where I have studied both Amanda Dufner and Elin Nordegren in bikinis—



Players and scribes alike stay at the same Ritz-Carlton. It turns us media types into anthropologists, studying an exotic species in its natural environment.

because the readers have a right to know. Just as memorable (though less visually compelling) was watching Tom Watson swing dance to the Brian Setzer Orchestra at Kapalua's annual tournament-week concert. Circa 2005, I had some bad mojo going with Ernie Els, until I spied him poolside with his wife and sent over a round of conciliatory piña coladas. Not to be outdone, he had an entire meal delivered my way. (Interviews with Easy were much tastier after that.) There's a basketball court near the pool at the Ritz where I fed Zach Johnson a


SHIPNUCK: JAMES WESTMAN; ILLUSTRATION: SEAN MCCABE

MY BAG

series of three-pointers. (Even in flip-flops, he's money.) The tournament has a long tradition of spoiling the players, including nightly gifts and goodies (leis, jewelry for the wives) delivered to their room. One year I happened to be neighbors with Jesper Parnevik. The Swede always hung a DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door, so offerings meant for him were left in the hallway. I returned one night to the glorious, unmistakable aroma of fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies. I grabbed the tray and slinked into my room, devouring the whole batch in one sitting. (Jesper, I regret nothing.)

Something about the Maui air brings out the lovebirds. Back in 2009, I broke the news on GOLF.com that Adam Scott and screen siren Kate Hudson were frolicking together on the beach. Two years later, during the second round, I was in front of the Plantation Course clubhouse when Natalie Gulbis sashayed by. I asked her what she was doing so far from home. She confided that lately she had been "hanging out" with Dustin Johnson. Given the intimacy of Kapalua, you can't hide the likes of Gulbis. Knowing that word of her dalliance with Johnson would get out anyway, I figured I'd be the one to break the news. Gulbis didn't want to be quoted, saying, "I'll let Dustin handle our PR." She told me she'd come straight from the airport and was heading to the hotel to freshen up. I tried to grab Johnson after his round, but he sprinted to the parking lot and roared off for a rendezvous with Natalie. (Can you blame him?)

Not long after, with misgivings, I rang DJ's room. He was, shall we say, distracted when he answered. "Call back in an hour," he said, slamming down the phone. I did. He didn't answer. (Can you blame him?)

Within minutes, my article went live—alas, without quotes—touching off a media frenzy about their relationship. It was the kind of story that only happens at Kapalua. 



David Lingmerth

This sweet-swinging Swede packs 14 Pings

DRIVER

1) Ping G30, 10.5°, Aldila Rogue 60 shaft, X flex, 289 yards; \$350

FAIRWAY WOOD

2) Ping G25, 15°, Aldila Tour Blue 75 shaft, X flex, 250 yards; \$240

HYBRID

3) Ping Anser, 17° bent to 17.5°, Matrix Ozik Altus Red shaft, X flex, 230 yards; \$100

IRONS

4) Ping i25 (4-PW), Ping ZZ-65 Cushin steel shaft, stiff flex; \$800 for eight
4-iron: 215 yards
5-iron: 200 yards
6-iron: 190 yards
7-iron: 180 yards
8-iron: 167 yards
9-iron: 155 yards
PW: 140 yards

PUTTER

5) Ping Cadence TR Ketch (blue), 32"; \$230

BALL

Titleist Pro V1x; \$48/dozen

WEDGES

6) Ping Glide, 50°/SS bent to 50.5°, 123 yards; 54°/SS bent to 55°, 107 yards; 60°/SS, 93 yards. All with Ping ZZ-65 Cushin steel shafts, stiff flex; \$130 each



"I really like my 60-degree Glide wedge. It's so soft, and the ball comes out with lots of spin and lands gently."

ASK THE RULES GUY

Got a question about the Rules? Ask the Rules Guy—he won't throw the book at you!



You can watch video rulings featuring Rules Guy himself! Go to GOLF.com/rules-guy



Dear Rules Guy:
Many high-handicap golfers play alone at my club during the week and always seem to win easily during weekend competitions. I suspect they're entering false scores. When a golfer plays alone, must those scores count for handicapping purposes?

—MARK, VIA E-MAIL

Sam Snead said to never gamble with a stranger, who he defined as anyone you haven't played with at least a dozen times. A wise man, the Slammer. The unfortunate truth is, some players are going to fib about their scores, as these Pinocchios may well

be doing at your club—and there's not a whole lot you can do about it. But I have some good news for you. The USGA Handicap System is being updated for 2016, and playing alone will be considered an unacceptable score for handicap posting. Handicaps are also subject to peer review, meaning that it's up to a club's handicap committee to determine if a player's index accurately reflects his or her potential. So if a player consistently posts suspiciously lower scores in competitions, your club's handicap committee has the authority to adjust that player's index to reflect his or her current ability.

Question, Rules Man:
I marked my 40-foot birdie putt with an old penny, then pulled the flag for one of my playing partners. But when it was my turn, I couldn't find the mark, and after five minutes I gave up the search. I should have been penalized, right?

—THOMAS TRAUTMANN, CHARLOTTE, N.C.

Well, aren't you a doubting Thomas. Actually, a lost marker isn't the same as a lost ball. If you didn't cause the marker to move, you can just estimate where the penny was and replace your ball (no closer to the hole) without penalty. If you *did* cause it to move, however, it's a one-stroke penalty.

Hey Rules Guru:

I have a tricky one for you. My buddy hit his tee shot on a par-3 into the woods. He took a provisional and knocked it to two inches! As his group got close to the green, a playing partner of his spotted a ball in the bushes. My friend declined to identify that ball because he wanted to play the second ball, which was a tap-in bogey. Was what he did legal?

—PETE PERRETT, VIA E-MAIL

In short: No. Once a player hits a provisional, the Rules don't require him to look for his original ball. However, according to Decision 27-2c/2, if the ball *may* have been found, even accidentally, then it can't be ignored. (Your friend's refusal to identify his ball could result in disqualification, per Decision 27/13.) And if said ball is his, any other strokes made with the provisional would equate to playing the wrong ball, which carries a penalty of loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. Now, had your pal not declared a provisional and taken the stroke-and-distance penalty on the tee, his kick-in bogey would be A-OK.

GOT A RULES QUESTION?

» Of course you do! Whatever it may be, send yours to rulesguy@golf.com and the question may be answered in an upcoming issue of GOLF. Until then, play by the Rules!

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FOR PETE'S SAKE

BY PETER KOSTIS

GOLF magazine Top 100
Teacher & CBS Sports Analyst

At Your Service

As we celebrate the best players of 2015, let's also salute the unsung heroes who make the Tour possible

I WAS RECENTLY waiting to board my flight at Phoenix Sky Harbor airport when I saw a family thank a U.S. Marine for his service. It fills me with patriotic pride when people pay respect to soldiers, police officers and firefighters for the important jobs they do. This issue celebrates Jordan Spieth as GOLF's Player of the Year. That got me thinking about other MVPs who work in the golf industry—those who don't get the credit they deserve. As we reflect on 2015's top players, here's a shout-out to some of the unsung heroes who help bring the Tour into our living rooms every week.

Superintendents

In 2015, savage weather besieged several Tour stops, especially the Zurich Classic in New Orleans, as well as the Crowne Plaza Invitational and the AT&T Byron Nelson, both near Dallas/Ft. Worth. At the Nelson, the massive storms and flooding were so bad that I thought Sunday would be a washout, but thanks to the tremendous work of the superintendents and their crews, we finished on Sunday at each of those events. Every week, a stellar staff prepares the course for play, no matter how bad the weather gets. Consider this a thank-you note to those men and women for their efforts.

Volunteers

How many volunteers does it take to run a PGA Tour event? *Thousands.* That's not a punch line, it's the truth. Without these generous people, the Tour would simply cease to be. Not only are they unpaid, but they cover their own expenses—even the cost of their own uniforms. It's also worth noting that, if volunteers were paid minimum wage for their time, millions of dollars that the Tour gives to charities would instead go to event-management staff payroll. And volunteer assignments are not always glamorous. For every lucky soul who gets to be a marshal on the 18th hole, many more are, say, directing traffic in hot, dusty parking lots literally miles from those emerald fairways. The Tour is successful



When bad weather strikes, grounds crews save the day.

Grounds crews, volunteers and rules officials don't get the credit they deserve for the work they do each week.

in large part because of their efforts. It's a thankless job, so to these volunteers, I simply say, "Thank you!"

The Tour Rules Staff

These experts (along with their counterparts on the European Tour) know the Rules of Golf as well as just about anyone, but they do a lot more than simply enforce the game's bylaws. They're often up at 4:00 a.m. to set hole locations, work on pairings and schedule tee times, all so that the field is able to finish mere minutes before the end of TV coverage.

When the USGA and R&A weigh future rules changes (along with their potential consequences), they'll be missing out on a wealth of valuable insight if they don't sit down and talk with the Tour rules team. These learned people know what rules need to be modified to speed up play. And they, along with the other unheralded difference makers I've mentioned, bring new meaning to the phrase "for the good of the game." It's my honor to work among them.

ASK PETER

Hey, Peter:
How can I keep my swing in shape when I'm stuck indoors for the winter?

—Jose Gutierrez,
Bozeman, Mont.

Have a short club specially made. It's easy. Just cut down an old 7- or 8-iron by about a third, removing the butt end. You can take full swings indoors without hitting the ceiling and still maintain your regular posture. Another cold-weather option? Use a medicine ball to keep your swing honed. Get one that's between four and 10 pounds and assume your golf posture a few feet from a wall (which serves as your target). Turning back and through, throw the ball against the wall and catch it several times. You'll improve your turn and release and keep up your conditioning and range of motion.

Got a question for Peter? Tweet him @peterjkostis or visit peterkostis.com.

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BY MARK BROADIE

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The Going Low-down

The odds of carding a 62 or better are steep, even for the pros. It turns out that consistency—not miracle shots—gets it done.



» **SMYLIE KAUFMAN WAS GRINNING** after he fired a 61 in the final round of the 2015 Shriners Hospitals for Children Open to earn his first Tour win. Like most ultra-low rounds, the rookie's super loop wasn't predictable. A 62 or better happens about once every 1,000 rounds on Tour. That left me wondering how, exactly, it's achieved. By knocking it stiff all day? Sinking a few bombs? Eagling a par 5 or two? Maybe all of the above?

To figure out how the pros go *really* low, I looked at PGA Tour rounds dating to 2003 in which players shot 62 or better. But first, some context. Data shows that a typical Tour round is an even-par score of 71, with three birdies, three bogeys and 12 pars. Players hit almost 12 greens in regulation (resulting in three birdies and nine pars), and they get up and down about half the time they miss a green (resulting in three pars and three bogeys). In other words, the route to a 71 is pretty straightforward. Far more unexpected is how players pull off the rare ultra-low round.

A 62 or better happens about once every 1,000 rounds on Tour. That left me wondering how it's achieved.

SURPRISE NO. 1

Eagles aren't that common. A typical 62 consists of nine birdies and nine pars, with a hot player hitting 15 greens in regulation (resulting in nine birdies and six pars) and getting up and down all three times a green is missed. The round includes two birdies on three par-5 holes, usually by knocking it close to (not onto) the green in two, and getting it up and down twice.

SURPRISE NO. 2

Although bombers card the majority of 62s or better, they don't hit it longer than usual when they go low; accuracy makes the difference. They hit 10 fairways instead of eight, and the combination of hitting more greens and hitting it closer to the pin saves them two-plus strokes.

SURPRISE NO. 3

Burying bombs on the greens is a minor factor. Ultra-low shooters typically save a little more than three strokes with their putting—but not thanks to epic rolls. They sink two additional putts between five and 15 feet. They gain another stroke either from sinking one additional putt between three and five feet, or one more between 15 and 25 feet.

You may never go as low as Kaufman, but it's helpful to keep the key lessons in mind: Hit approaches closer, hole more short and medium-length putts, and... "Smyle!"



NUMBERS GAME

The average score posted the day after a 62 is a 69. Some do much better than that—some do a lot worse.

BEST FOLLOW-UP TO A 62 IN 2015**63****Jimmy Walker**

At the Sony Open, he followed his 62 in Round 3 with a 63 in Round 4

WORST FOLLOW-UP TO A 62 IN 2015**74****Erik Compton**

At the Wyndham, he shot 62 in Round 1, then a 74 in Round 2

BROADIE'S TAKE:

There's an adage in golf: "It's hard to follow a low round with another low round." But whoever said it first probably wasn't exactly sure why. The reason you don't see many back-to-back ultra-low rounds is that it's just so difficult to shoot a very low round in the first place.

SWING SEQUENCE

Watch+Learn

Copy South Korean **Sangmoon Bae's** symmetrical swing for reliable

Sangmoon's shoulders, hips, knees and feet are square to the target line.



His clubhead stays outside the hands, a must for consistency.



Left arm moves across the chest, not up in the air.



Shaft bisects the arms halfway down. Copy this!



Arms move in unison to square the face through impact.



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Analysis by Top 100 Teacher **Chris O'Connell**, The Plane Truth at The Courses at Watters Creek, Plano, Texas



GOLF WILL MISS Sangmoon Bae. His mandatory two-year stint in South Korea's military will keep him off the Tour, but at least he went out in style—and with a smile. The 29-year-old played before supportive fans at the Presidents Cup in South Korea, earning 2.5 points for the Internationals and cementing his status as his country's golf poster boy. Back in the States, Bae had quite a 2014-15 Tour season. He notched his second victory (the 2014 Frys.com Open) and four other top 10s, banking \$2.6 million.



STATISTICS

The Line on Bae

FINAL 2015 STATISTICS

289.8 yds

Average Driving Distance

60.03%

Driving Accuracy

113.5 mph

Clubhead Speed

15

Professional Victories

power and accuracy with every club in your bag



Tour secret: Right arm matches the spine at the top.

Shaft drops from the shoulder plane...

...to the left-arm plane. A perfect transition.

Right arm travels across the chest, as his left arm did in the backswing.

A mirror image of frame 7. Symmetry at its best.

While not crazy long, Bae is crazy symmetrical. His downswing and throughswing match his backswing at almost every position. Technically, it's textbook. His secret? His left arm moves across his chest in the backswing and then up to his shoulder line as he reaches the top; his right arm then retraces these steps as he nears his finish. Chances are, your backswing and downswing don't match up like this. Sure, you can hit solid shots by combining steep and flat moves, but Bae's mechanics are great because they don't require perfect timing. Copy what you see—his swing makes a hard game look easy. And stay safe, Sangmoon. We'll see you in two years.



DIGITAL BONUS

Control Sangmoon Bae's swing with a swipe of your finger on GOLF's iPad and tablet editions. Visit GOLF.com/allaccess.



The 5th Annual Travelin' Joe Awards

Winged Foot vs. Baltusrol. Jack's new track. Panic at the pro-am. The TJs return to honor the very best (and the rest) in 2015 travel.



DO-GO-CHASING-WATERFALLS AWARD

Can a natural waterfall look so spectacular that it appears man-made? That's the allure at the 413-yard, par-4 11th at the Golf Club at Black Rock in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. My partner that day in August was Jim Engh, who designed the course. He did confess to blending some artificial rocks with the actual ones, and he challenged me to distinguish between them. I failed, but I did knock my approach to 20 feet.

WILDEST CART RIDE EVER

Jack Nicklaus's edge-of-the-Pacific Quivira Golf Club in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, opened in October 2014, instantly becoming one of the most spectacular tracks in the world. The cliff-top holes that straddle rock-encrusted dune ridges will leave you dizzy—and that's just from the cart ride. There's no comparison in golf to the switchback-filled, vertigo-inducing, five-minute cart journey up to the fifth tee.





MAIN: BRIAN OAR; LEFT: ROB PERRY; JOE: ANGUS MURRAY

TOP SPOT FOR SUMMER VACATION

With exquisite Pacific panoramas and ideal temperatures, Dana Point, Calif., and its St. Regis Monarch Beach hotel offer the ideal

August escape. When I visited, some GOP presidential contenders had just departed. In their honor, I favored the right side on my drive and approach to the oceanside par-4 third, one of RTJ Jr.'s best.

HOTTEST SIBLING RIVALRY

New York City-area stalwarts Winged Foot and Baltusrol both boast major pedigrees and two A.W. Tillinghast treasures. And their "major" track might not even be the best on-site. Gil Hanse's brilliant greens redo elevated Winged Foot East, and Balty's Upper has dazzling terrain and inspired green contouring. Me, I'll take Winged Foot East over the West, and Baltusrol Upper over its famed Lower.

UNDISCOVERED TREASURE AWARD

A two-minute car-ferry ride takes you from Martha's Vineyard to Chappaquiddick Island, made infamous by Ted Kennedy in 1969. The undiscovered Royal and Ancient Chappaquiddick Links deserves fame in its own right. Dating (in part) to 1887, the nine-hole, par-29 isn't technically public, but reach owner's rep Brad Woodger and he might greet you at the dock in his '71 VW van, zip you down forested sandy lanes, and let you tee it up. Conditioning is ragged, but the greens are fine, and the quirky layout hews to the land's dips and rolls. You feel like you're playing in '96—that is, 1896.

MOST WELCOME RETURN OF A BRUTAL 18TH HOLE

The Champions Tour amped up the nostalgia in March with the inaugural Tucson Conquistadores Classic at Omni Tucson National's Catalina course. It was a regular stop on the Tour from 1965 through 2006, so many Senior Tourists (including Tom Watson) got to relive a bit of their youth. My pro-am partner Billy Andrade scorched the parkland-style layout with a 67. We were all rattled by the 18th. Once ranked as the hardest closer on Tour, the uphill 443-yard par-4 demands a drive between two lakes, followed by a healthy approach to a well-bunkered, elevated

green replete with confounding crinkles. The winners (not us, alas) got a gaudy, gold conquistador helmet. Coolest. Trophy. Ever. Speaking of harrowing pro-am moments...

BAD MO-JOE AWARD

In January, nerves got me but good at the Humana Challenge pro-am. On Friday, on the par-5 18th at the Arnold Palmer course at PGA West in La Quinta, Calif., I was greenside in three, with a nightmare angle from a tight lie to a back-right pin. TV cameras rolled. Fans watched from the grandstand. A huge lake loomed. *Gulp.* I skulled it and made a double-bogey. Huge kudos to Kevin Kisner, who shook off my bad mojo and went on to a remarkable Tour season.





SHOW-OFF SHOTS

with Brady Riggs

BURIED LIE IN BUNKER

Degree of difficulty:

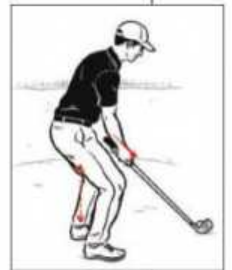
7/10

When it's useful: Your ball is almost completely submerged in a greenside bunker.

How to hit it: It's all about belief. You must swing with conviction. Follow these three keys.

1. Low hands.

To avoid sending the ball deeper into the sand, it's critical that your clubhead doesn't make direct contact with the ball. Set up with your hands lower than normal to keep the hosel down and far enough away from the ball at impact.



2. Align the ball with the heel.

When setting up for a typical bunker shot, you'd line up your ball in the heart of the clubface. With this shot, aim the heel of the club directly behind the submerged ball. This creates some dig and a big explosion.



3. Saw-off your finish.

Make a very aggressive swing, then abbreviate your finish. Halting your swing right after impact actually speeds up the clubhead through impact, helping you cut through the lie—and splash it onto the green every time.



New Year, New Stats!

With 2016 upon us, a few suggestions for how the PGA Tour could punch up its performance metrics

OLD STAT	NEW STAT	LEADER
Strokes Gained: Driving	Strokes Lost: Club Hurling	JOHN DALY
Efficiency from 10-15 yards	Deficiency from 10-15 yards	TIGER WOODS
Par Breakers	Ankle Breakers	RORY MCILROY
Ball Striking	Ball Busting	PHIL MICKELSON
Sand Save Percentage	Head Shave Percentage	STEWART CINK
Greens in Regulation	Greens for Regularity	GARY PLAYER
Scrambling	Rambling	STEVE ELKINGTON
Rough Proximity	Rough Proximity to His Old Self	JASON DUFNER
Three-Putt Avoidance	Three Musketeer Resemblance	VICTOR DUBUISSON
Money List	Money Lost	JOHN DALY

THE GOLF GODS MUST BE CRAZY



» Cougar Canyon G.C. in Myrtle Creek, Ore., played host to the Fore Twenty Tournament, a networking event for the cannabis industry. Among the giveaways were joints and swag signed by pot-loving comedian Tommy Chong.



A ROUND WITH...

JESSICA MARKSBURY



Follow Jessica Marksburry
on Twitter @Jess_Marksburry

TheCard

Chi Chi Rodríguez

The legendary Hall of Famer, now 80, talks scotch, “bull” fighting and getting the best of Jack and Arnie

» **We’re drinking Johnnie Walker Black Label. Have you always been a scotch fan?**

I [generally] drink Johnnie Walker Blue, but I haven’t had a drink in six months. I lost four inches off my waist. I’m trying to get in shape so I can go back to the Senior Tour one more time.

» **Really? And I’m corrupting you!**

They have a new division where you have to be at least 80 years old. You play three days for a million dollars, one hole a day, and if you can remember what you shot, you win! [Laughs]

» **You’re still a jokester. I remember watching you on TV celebrating a birdie. You’d use your putter as a sword to kill an imaginary bull. How’d that start?**

I [used to put] my hat over the hole after I made a birdie. Some pros—more like has-beens who never were!—complained that I was damaging the hole. So I decided the hole was a bull, and I was a bullfighter. And I had to kill the bull.

» **What kind of reaction did you get the first time you did it?**
I don’t remember, but

when I quit playing the Tour, I started doing it for double bogeys instead of birdies. [Laughs]

» **You won eight PGA Tour events, and then a whopping 22 more on the Champions Tour. What made the difference?**

Most everybody [on the Champions Tour] was out of shape, and they were older. Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus—especially Arnie—he used to beat my brains out when we were young. In the end, I got even. I started beating him up. And that felt really good.

» **Did anyone have more fun than you did as a pro?**

I think Gary Player did. And maybe Doug Sanders and Lee Trevino. We had some real characters.

“Arnie used to beat my brains out when we were young. In the end, I got even. That felt good.”



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**TOUR
CONFIDENTIAL**

Jessica leads GOLF and Sports Illustrated writers in a lively discussion of the game's biggest stories, every Monday at **GOLF.com/tourconfidential**

» **Is pro golf less fun now than it used to be?**

No, I think the game is still fun. When you're making \$22 million like [Jordan Spieth], it's time to smile. [Laughs]

» **You and your wife, Iwalani, have been happily married for more than 50 years. What's the secret?**

It's simple. Let your wife win all the battles, and you'll win the war.



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BRETT FAVRE IN AUTUMN

The future Hall of Famer lets us into his ranch and his heart to dish on football, life and his complex relationship with Green Bay.

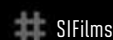
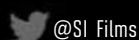
GOALS, GOONS AND GARBAGE

The teen son of a waste-management king runs a minor league hockey team, the Danbury Trashers, that wins respect with fists and FBI attention.

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Performance

CENTER

EDITED BY DAVID DeNUNZIO

Powered by the Top 100 Teachers in America

HIT APPROACHES TIGHT!

MAKE A MARK ON THE GREENS

You pipe a perfect drive, only to watch your flubbed iron shot fall far short of the green. You've squandered a great tee shot and taken birdie (and likely par) out of play. Sound familiar? The truth is, you can't go low unless you hit greens. Happily, a small improvement in your irons can lead to big rewards—our research shows that hitting just two more GIRs each round will reduce a mid- to high-handicapper's index by four strokes. So turn the page and start making it rain on the greens. Oh, and get a sturdy divot-repair tool. You're gonna need it.

THE FIX IS IN
The fun part of hitting greens? Putting your divot-repair tool to good use!

Photography by JAMES WESTMAN

39

Proven Ways to
Shoot Your Best
Score Ever!



KNOCK DOWN THE PIN!

You're three steps away from more birdie putts

BETTER IRONS NOW

The quickest way to hit more greens is to forget the flag and aim for the center of the putting surface. This keeps things simple, and it works. Check out this PGA Tour data from 2015:

APPROACH SHOT	AVG. PROXIMITY TO PIN
100-125 YDS.	19.8 FT.
150-175 YDS.	27.5 FT.
200-225 YDS.	41.1 FT.

Even the world's sharpest players often leave themselves hefty distances from the flag. And since your shots will tend to fall outside these numbers, it's even more critical to give yourself a big margin of error on your approaches. Gunning for the fat of the green helps you avoid card-killing hazards. Try these three tips to further hone your iron game. When you get your approach shots dialed in, you can pick your spots to be more aggressive—and take dead aim at the flag.

1

GROOVE A PERFECT SWING PATH

At the range, set an alignment stick at a 45-degree angle to the ground. Make sure the stick is pointing at your target, then place a ball under the tip of the elevated end. Your goal? Miss the stick as you swing through impact. This will help you groove an inside approach to the ball, which is the best way to consistently hit straight shots.

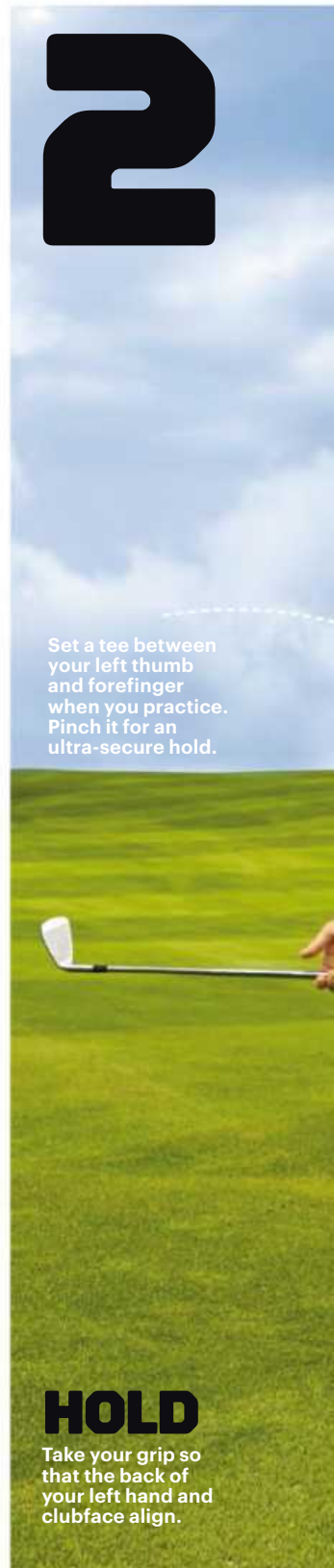


DRILL

Don't swing straight down the line. Use an inside move for shots that never miss.

2

Set a tee between your left thumb and forefinger when you practice. Pinch it for an ultra-secure hold.



HOLD

Take your grip so that the back of your left hand and clubface align.

TAKE A SQUARE-STRIKE GRIP

You want to strike the ball with a square clubface. The trick? Hold the club in front of you, toe up (as shown). With the back of your left wrist flat and facing away from you, wrap your fingers around the grip. Secure the handle with your right hand and take your stance. Look down—you want to replicate what you see at impact.



3

GOOD-BYE, SLICE. HELLO, DRAW!

As you swing through impact, allow the clubhead to release fully. Feel as though your right forearm is crossing over your left in your follow-through and forming an "X" (below). If you got Step No. 1 at left down pat, the X will take shape to the right of the target from your perspective, and the ball will draw.



X marks the spot.

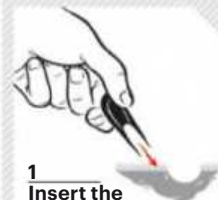
DRAW

Let your forearms cross in your release. This stops slices and promotes a draw.

SCAR FOR THE COURSE?

BE GOOD TO YOUR GREEN—FIX YOUR BALL MARK. HERE'S HOW.

One drawback to hitting more greens: Fixing those darned pitch marks! We kid. This clean-up duty should be enjoyed. It means you stuck your approach—and it's good etiquette. But you want to fix your mark right, or you could scar the green. Use these two simple steps—and avoid the no-no.



1
Insert the tool near the rear of the divot.



2
Use the tool to push turf toward the center of the divot, then work the sides. Tap down on the mark with your putter to finish the job.



NO!
Don't pull the turf upward; you'll tear roots and bring sand to the surface.

1



CLUB

SLIDE IT UNDER THE BALL

Make a few practice pitch swings. As you do, visualize the club sliding along the turf through the impact zone. No, you don't want to take a divot, but you do want the club to brush the grass.

2



ARMS

SYNCH THEM WITH YOUR CHEST TURN

On practice swings, think of your arms and chest as a single unit, both back and through. This arm-body connection halts unwanted wrist action and leads to better strikes.

3



RIGHT ARM

ALIGN IT WITH THE SHAFT

Make one final practice swing and hold your finish. If you nailed steps 1 and 2, your right arm and the shaft will line up and the clubface will point skyward. These two checkpoints are vital—get them down and you'll be rattling pins in no time at all.

30-SECOND FIX

PITCH PERFECT

Turn chunks into tap-ins with three easy moves

» The secret to hitting crisp, on-target pitches is to eliminate excessive wrist action or shaft lean (in either direction) at impact. Copy these three moves, and you'll not only pitch it on—you'll knock it close!

Fine-Tuning

Use your right hand to hit one-arm pitches. (Southpaws, use your left hand.) This drill makes your arm, club and torso work in harmony.

A man in a blue shirt and sunglasses is cheering with his mouth wide open and arms raised. In the background, two other men are visible on a golf course with palm trees under a clear blue sky.

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Don't care what
my scorecard says.
Must be the sunshine.**

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HOW TO HOLE A DOUBLE-BREAKER

Guessing won't cut it. These tips will.

» Long, straight putts are scary enough. But double-breakers from downtown will send you to the bar early. Your pals can't figure out these surefire three-putts, but you'll be knocking them close—and sometimes in—with the three secrets to those long and winding rolls.

1

BREAK UP THE BREAK

THIS MONSTER IS THREE PUTTS IN ONE

There will be an initial slope, an in-between slope, and a final slope near the hole. First get a feel for how the first slope will affect your putt, because if you misjudge this one, you've got no chance. This is critical if you're putting over a saddle, as in this picture. At the very least, determine if the saddle will throw the ball to the left or right and by how much, then read the rest of the putt like any other.

—Chuck Evans

2

DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'

IF YOU THINK THE PUTT IS IMPOSSIBLE, IT WILL BE

A double-breaker is challenging, even for a Tour pro. But you've got to think about making it, just as you would a three-footer. Lowering expectations will lead to disaster. If you merely try to lag it to a five-foot circle around the hole, what if you miss your target by just two feet? It's three-jack city. The way to hole it starts with simply *trying* to hole it.

—Kevin Kirk

3

KEY IN AROUND THE CUP

THE SLOPE IS STRONGEST NEAR THE HOLE

Chuck's point in No. 1 is solid advice, but if the putt is long, the ball will be rolling too fast at the start for the initial slope to hold much sway. Instead, spend most of your read time near the hole, where the ball will move at its slowest and, thus, be more susceptible to break. The last thing you want is for the ball to be moving away from the hole as it slows. That makes the next putt that much more difficult.

—Mitchell Spearman

Extra Point

Locate the point where a double-breaking putt changes direction. Make your read all about getting the ball to that spot, then let speed do the rest.

ILLUSTRATION: DAREEN ROBINSON

BOOM TIME

Picture your swing as the rhythmic motion of a metronome's arm. This will improve your timing for a lot more power.

SWING THOUGHT

GET YOUR TIMING RIGHT

The secret to better tempo, easy power and huge hits

» You've probably been told to take the club back "low and slow." That works for some but not all. The truth is, you have your own natural swing rhythm, and a slower backswing may throw your motion off-tempo, leading to mis-hits. To discover your ideal rhythm, make three continuous practice swings back and forth at full speed, much like the rhythmic arm of a metronome. Don't worry about being too fast or slow. Pay attention to your third backswing—it will be your best tempo. Why? Continuous motion creates the proper momentum needed to control the club and set it on plane, and that's tough to do from a static start and with a single swing. This isn't merely a helpful drill; you can make it part of your preshot routine. Find out if a faster backswing is right for you.



Four-time major winner Rory McIlroy can blow it past almost anyone on Tour. Use his four key moves to become more explosive—and accurate—off the tee box.

1 HOW TO MUSCLE IT

Rory's bulging left triceps isn't for show—it's evidence that his arms are working hard to slow down the handle and transfer its speed to the clubhead for a whip-fast strike. But you don't have to be ripped to rip it—just swing in rhythm and it will pay off at impact.

Rory McIlroy Bomb Deeep Drives

By Rod Lidenberg, Halla Greens G.C., Chanhassen, Minn.



2

POST AND SWIVEL

The secret to Rory's freakish hip speed? He "looks" his left leg near impact (see No. 3), creating a post around which his hips turn. You want to feel as though your right hip is "chasing" the ball off the clubface.

3

LOCK IT UP

Don't turn your left knee toward the target through impact. It's a big-time power drain common to recreational swings. Instead, lock it in place like Rory does. You don't have to straighten your leg to do it. In fact, it helps to simply push your left foot into the turf.

4

BE PUSHY

A bonus to "pushing" the ground with your left leg: It produces a powerful thrust in the opposite direction, creating more clubhead speed. Notice how vertical Rory looks at impact with his arms pulled straight. You push, your body pulls—and the ball goes far.

321.1

McIlroy's field-topping average yardage off the tee during his 7-shot victory at Quail Hollow in 2015.

Photography by ANDREW REDINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

4 EASY PIECES

DRAW, PARTNER!

Hit sweet, pin-seeking irons... and never slice again!

1 Place your right hand on the handle first. Make sure your right forearm and the shaft are aligned and that the butt of the club points at your belt buckle. Then add your left hand—your left forearm will automatically be higher than your right (photo above). You're now set up to hit a nice, high draw.



2 Turn your left shoulder over your right leg as you swing to the top. This tilts your upper body slightly away from the target, setting up an inside-out downswing attack. It should feel as though you're turning your back to the target as you press down on your right foot.



3 Spinning your hips too early in the downswing usually results in a slice—and a big number. Instead, “slide” them toward the target as you start back down and try to get your left hip slightly higher than your right. This will instantly nix your over-the-top move.



4 Turn your right knuckles toward the ground as you release the club through impact—this will create a slightly closed clubface relative to your swing. Since the other moves all but ensure an inside-out path, the ball will start right and draw, just as you see on Tour.

DON'T GAMBLE WITH YOUR BALL CHOICE

When shopping for the perfect sphere, it can pay to pay more

» Playing the right ball helps you shoot lower scores. When shopping, one expert says, look beyond distance. “Don’t base your decision on how far the ball flies,” says Dean Snell, the founder and CEO of Snell Golf and former designer of various TaylorMade and Titleist balls, including the original Pro V1. “All modern balls are optimized for distance, so there’s basically zero yardage difference with the driver, regardless of price, brand, number of layers or even cover material.”

Snell suggests setting a price ceiling, then experimenting with a few models that fit your budget. Oh, and leave your driver in the bag. Instead, compare the way

each ball behaves on approach shots in windy conditions, their stopping power on chips and pitches, and how they feel off your putter. “Even a casual golfer can detect significant differences between models in these areas,” Snell says.

Don’t be surprised if you take a liking to a pricier ball. “Tour models are made to deliver the ultimate in short-game performance, along with the distance of less expensive two-piece models,” Snell says. Average joes playing Tour-pro balls? “Absolutely. In fact, weekend golfers miss a lot of greens, so if you take cost out of the equation, they can benefit from Tour balls more than anyone.” —MICHAEL CHIVASKY

WHEEL OF FORTUNE
Bet on the right ball and you’ll win big where it counts: your scorecard.



TWO MOVES FOR BETTER BUNKER SHOTS

Try a Tour pro's finish for soft, pin-hunting sand swings

» When it comes to blasting it from greenside bunkers, the world's best players share many similar moves. Two of these are finishing the bunker swing with the hands left of the left shoulder and with the clubhead high above the head (photo, right). Why? Well, the only way to achieve this finish position is to release the club past a stable lower body and hit maximum clubhead speed just after impact. Try these key moves. They let you "thump" the sand under the ball with the sole of your wedge, instead of digging into the bunker with the leading edge.

Mistakes to avoid: Turning your hips too early on the downswing, decelerating, and trying to "hold on" to your release. Simply keep your lower body quiet and let the club power through impact. You'll look like a Tour pro from the bunker, both in style and results.



1

Clubhead way above the head.

2

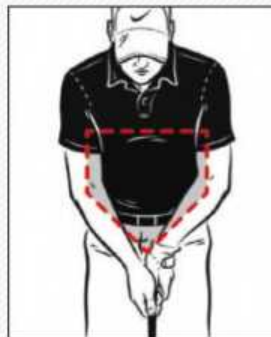
Hands left of lead shoulder.

SUCCESS STORY

33%

THAT'S THE AMOUNT THIS READER CUT HIS HANDICAP IN 90 DAYS. HERE'S HOW.

» The doctor is in—the hole! That wasn't always the case, as Greenville, S.C., pathologist Scott Parker, 62, will tell you. "I've always been a straight hitter, but if I had a 20-foot putt or longer, I was sure to three-putt." Enter **Top 100 Teacher Carol Preisinger** (Kiawah Island Club), who cured Dr. Parker's putting woes with a single tip, taking his handicap from 10.6 to 7.1 in less than three months. "Carol taught me to putt with my elbows out, creating a 'home-plate' shape between my shoulders and arms (below). This kept me from 'juicing' putts with my right hand and made it a lot easier to keep the putter on the correct path." You can do likewise. Try this stroke-saver. Doctor's orders.



Create a home-plate shape at setup for better control.

GOLFER'S-EYE VIEW

Rough? Ready!

Lob it close even from heavy lies

Missing greens is a double whammy: Not only do you waste a stroke, but you have to hit your next shot from the junk. Actually, launching high, soft-landing shots from the rough is easier than you think—you can even use your normal lob swing. It all comes down to proper address and clubface position. Copy what you see here and you'll make super saves from the thickest lies.

ESCAPE TROUBLE

START SQUARE

Set the leading edge of your lob wedge perpendicular to the target line. Don't open the face! That can cause hosel rockets, and it makes it easy to slide too far under the ball, especially in Bermuda grass. Squaring the face puts it in a perfect position.

PRESS FORWARD

Position the ball slightly ahead of center and set your hands slightly ahead of the ball. This lets you come down a bit steeper than normal, so your wedge will cut right through the rough.

BUILD A BASE

Slide both knees slightly toward the target. This stabilizes your lower body and gets your weight over your left side—two musts for solid contact.

PREP FOR HINGE

Focus on your right wrist—you want to hinge it as soon as you take away the club. Point your thumbs toward the sky in your backswing and again in your follow-through. The ball will fly high and land softly on even the speediest greens.

SHAZAM
This Photo

for a video lesson
of this tip.
See page 11

**EXPAND
HERE**

Keep your
shoulders
back and your
chest out.



SHAZAM
This Photo
for Natalie's full
pre-round routine.
See page 11

BACK IN BUSINESS

Loosen your lumbar—and add yards—
with Natalie's favorite stretch

Despite several back surgeries, I'm entering my 15th season on the LPGA Tour. My secret? This stretch. Not only does it help loosen up the big muscles in my back so I can make a bigger and more powerful turn, it activates the discs in my spine so I can avoid future injury. It's easy:

Lie face down on the ground and do a simple push-up, but keep your legs flat against the ground, sort of like you're a cobra. Hold for a count, then repeat.

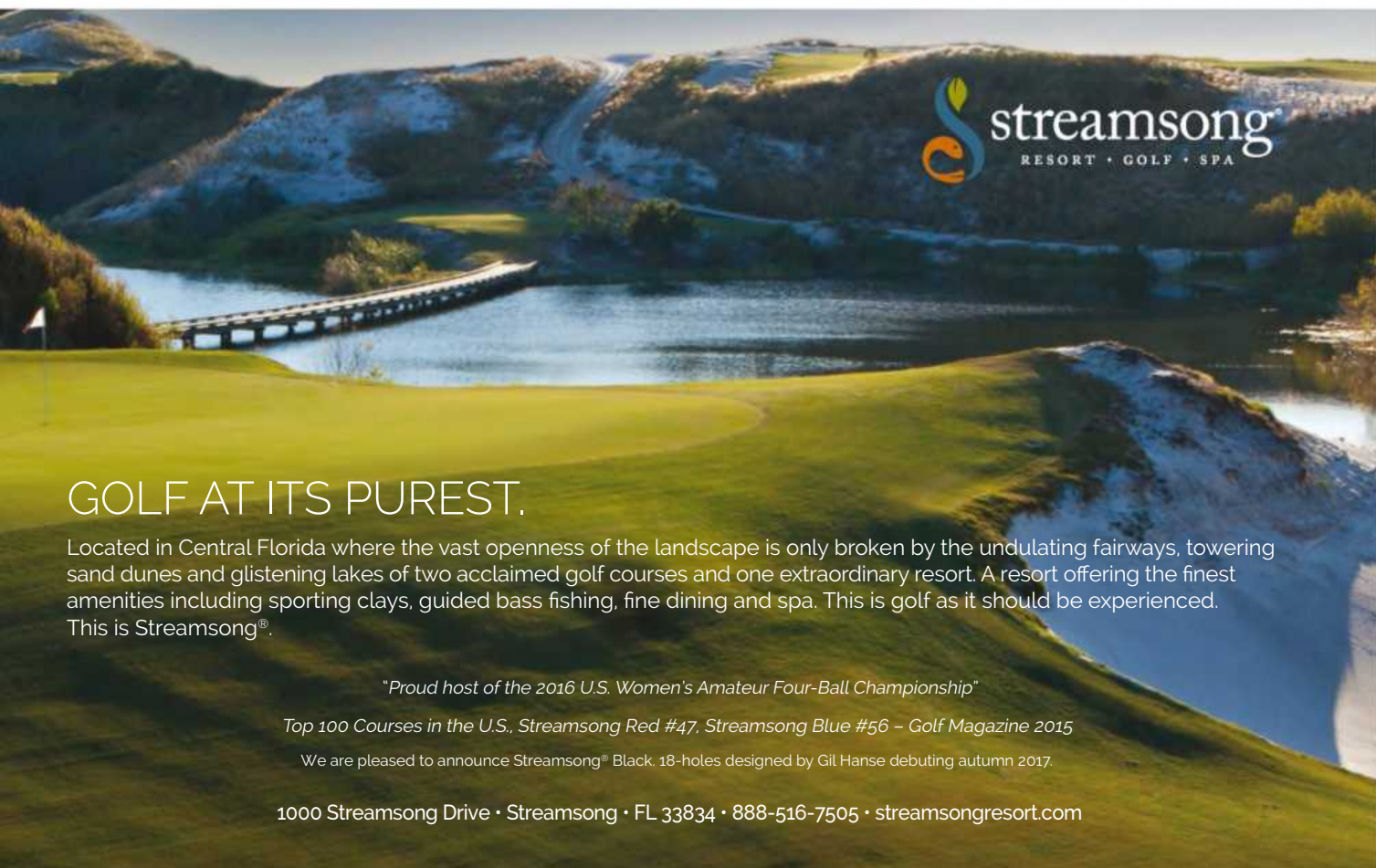
I like to do 50 before and after each round I play. You may feel a few cracks as you go up and down. That's okay—it's all a part of good preparation.

STRETCH HERE

Feel it across the middle of your back and in your spine. If you can't go all the way up, don't. A little stretch goes a long way.

LPGA Tour pro **Natalie Gulbis** is based in Las Vegas, Nev. She has four professional wins.

KOJIRO KINNO



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TIPS FOR THE TIPS

A hangover doesn't mean your game has to go in the tank.



I'LL DRINK TO THAT!

Hang a low score when hungover

That last scotch seemed like a good idea—until your throbbing head made your morning tee time tortuous. You may be hurting, but a hangover doesn't have to hurt your score. Use these tips to go low when you're feeling the wrath of grapes (or suds, or whiskey...)

1. Let's get something clear. Current theories suggest that congeners—byproducts of fermentation that impart flavor and color to a variety of red wines and honey-brown liquors—make hangovers worse. So when you drink, stick with clear spirits like vodka and white wine to mitigate the damage. And guzzle water before bed, to rehydrate.

2. Refuel. Down a breakfast burrito and a Gatorade first thing. You'll replenish the electrolytes your body evacuated in response to alcohol.

3. Skip the Tylenol. Its active ingredient, acetaminophen, is tough on your liver, which could use a break. Instead, slam a serving of Blowfish, the only anti-hangover remedy deemed effective by the FDA. The caffeine-and-aspirin-loaded tablets dissolve in water for fizzy relief. (Visit forhangovers.com for more info.)

4. Adjust your expectations.

A hangover is basically a small exercise in alcohol withdrawal. As your body returns to homeostasis, you may suffer shakes and concentration loss. Shelve your swing-from-the-heels "Bubba" move; take an extra club, make a three-quarter swing, and just stay in your match. —Seth Kelly

COUNTER MEASURES

Pop the right pill and play pain-free

» "Not all pain relievers are alike," says Brandon Hobbs, PharmD, a clinical specialist at Orlando Regional Medical Center. Check with your doctor to see if the good pharmacist's advice for targeted relief is right for you.

YOU HAVE JOINT PAIN

Any non-steroid anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) will do, Hobbs says. The most popular is Aleve, which lasts twice as long as the same dose of Ibuprofen.



YOU'RE HUNGOVER

"Water is your best bet," Hobbs says. "As you hydrate, pop 400 mg of an Ibuprofen, like Advil." Just don't mix your NSAIDs or ingest with aspirin, he advises.



YOU HAVE A HEADACHE

If your throbbin' noggin is not hangover-related, take extra-strength Tylenol. Acetaminophen can safely be used if you're also popping an NSAID.



FOR BRUISES

When your drive bounces off the ladies' tee marker and bonks your elbow, your preferred NSAID (such as Motrin) will do. As for that bruised ego, you're on your own.





In the lead role: John Travolta, movie legend and aviation aficionado. Guest star: the legendary North American X-15 that smashed all speed and altitude records and opened the gateway to space. Production: Breitling, the privileged partner of aviation thanks to its reliable, accurate and innovative instruments – such as the famous Chronomat, the ultimate chronograph. Welcome to a world of legends, feats and performance.

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Jordan Spieth

GOLF

Player *of the* Year

» Dominance at Augusta. Clutch play at Chambers Bay. A Slam-tastic effort at St. Andrews. A near miss at the PGA. And a FedEx Cup exclamation point. In a word: *Wow!* No one saw Jordan Spieth's historic 2015 coming. And we can't wait to see what the wise-beyond-his-years superstar, 22, does for an encore.

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Young, Gunning

Jack in 1980. Tiger in 2000. Jordan Spieth's 2015 belongs in that rarified air. And at 22, he's just getting started.

By Michael Bamberger

Jordan Spieth looks like a country-clubber, on paper. (Tom Watson did, too.) Golf's latest man-child—the third male golf prodigy in the past 20 years—grew up at a private club in Dallas (Brookhaven, 54 holes). He attended private school (Jesuit College Prep.) He was wowing corporate chiefs as a teenager. Then there are the perks he enjoys: a private plane on call, the new shiny home with many TVs, his buddies in spare bedrooms.

» **ADD TO THE PACKAGE** Spieth's superb manners and his delight in going deep on a hundred different topics. And there's his ability to see the world beyond the leaderboard. Just look at him interact with kids with disabilities, whether it's a stranger at the mall or his sister, Ellie, on the course.

But beyond all of that, we witnessed another dimension to Spieth last year: He's got grit. He's flinty, in the tradition of Hogan, Palmer, Floyd, Trevino, and a very few others. Spieth in a spot will double-down and dig in.

You need grit to post one of the great years in golf history. Hogan in 1950, coming back from the car accident. Jack Nicklaus in 1980, coming back from a checked-out 1979. Tiger in 2000,

Annika the next. Rory in 2014, when the genius commentators thought he would go on holiday after winning the British Open. Instead, he continued his assault at Firestone, the PGA Championship, the Ryder Cup. That's what Jordan did in 2015: He kept the pedal down. His season belongs in the thin air of truly great golf.

The in-house conversation about who should be GOLF Magazine's Player of the Year went about like this:

"You think—"

"Yes."

Spieth won—all together now—the Masters in April by four, the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay in June over Dustin Johnson, finished a shot out of a playoff at the Old Course in July, and took solo second at the PGA Championship at Whistling Straits in August. Plus, the others: He won the Tour Championship at East Lake in Atlanta in September, secured three points for the winning U.S. Presidents Cup team in South Korea in October, and won two other Tour events, including the year's two most entertaining tournaments—the Valspar Championship in March and the John Deere Classic the week before the British Open, both in playoffs.

Yes, he putted like a savant. But the rest of his game is refreshingly imperfect. He doesn't make Mensa-level on-course decisions, as Big Jack did for decades. He's not a golfing machine, as Tiger was in his prime. He doesn't have Rory's firepower. What he has is that move where he makes a bogey, gets red-assy, and walks to the next tee even faster. (And he's plenty fast to begin with.) Palmer was the same way, except The King had a better grip.

Maybe the grip is overrated. A lot of life is compensation, right? You make up for a deficit in one area with an extra something somewhere else. Jordan's maternal grandmother changed





U.S. fans root hard for Spieth, and at Augusta he applauded right back.

thousands of cloth diapers (six kids) despite a left arm and hand rendered dead by a brain aneurism. She made a strong impression on young Jordan. His paternal grandfather, trying to make ends meet as a music teacher and conductor, sold cut firewood from his front yard. Both families lived near Bethlehem, Pa., a company town in those days. (Bethlehem Steel, where Jordan's paternal grandfather worked for decades.) Family vacations were in modest rented houses on Topsail Beach, in North Carolina. Jordan ran the kiddie show, his brother, sister and eight cousins following him. Chores before beach was the law. Family dinners were long and large, and Jordan watched and learned from his elders. His uncle the airline pilot and another who was a school principal. Among the aunts was a nurse, a teacher and the founder of a soccer league for autistic kids. Jordan's father was (and is) an I.T. guy. His mother was a stay-at-home mom (and today runs Jordan's charitable foundation).

In the Spieth house, on vacation and back

**SPIETH
IS FLINTY,
LIKE FLOYD,
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home in Dallas, the top of the order went God, Family, Work. Jordan Spieth doesn't just *seem* grounded. He is. In 2015, we saw his true colors again and again, and we saw the family in action, too. After he won the Masters, Jordan's father half pushed him back on to the 18th green, so that his son could return the applause that had showered him. At St. Andrews, Spieth, gutted by the lost chance for the Grand Slam, watched the playoff conclude, then congratulated the winner, his friend Zach Johnson, with a rare spot of warmth on a dank day. He talks about how his U.S. Open win was half a gift from Dustin Johnson. He acknowledges that at the PGA Championship, he got beat by a better golfer, Jason Day.

That is, Spieth noted, better that week. You're not keeping this guy down. "We all want to beat the crud out of each other," Spieth said when the season finally came to a halt. Yes, he respects his fellow players. Still, he offers this: "We want to beat each other down."

That's the spirit, kid. **G**

Jordan Spieth

player
of the
year

»MICHAEL GRELLER»

The Spieth

“Get that good picture, bud.” Caddie Michael Greller said it countless times last season. But beyond what he said, the looper in Jordan Spieth’s ear is more impressed with what he *saw* in 2015.

Interview by Cameron Morfit



Whisperer

With a hand from Greller, Spieth took dead aim at the 2015 PGA Championship.



In their relatively brief time together, Michael Greller and Jordan Spieth—or “Michael–Jordan,” for short—have become a marquee caddie-player partnership. Not that Greller, 38, seeks the spotlight. Although Spieth shares credit by using the term “we” as a reference to his inner circle, Greller freely admits, “That ‘we’ he’s talking about is 95 percent Jordan. The rest of us just try to get out of the way.”

The low-key Greller had the most up-close and thrilling look at Spieth’s remarkable year. The Washington State resident taught sixth-grade math before landing one of the best bags in golf, first looping for Spieth in 2011. He concedes that he’s one of the greener caddies on Tour (and one of the richest, taking home about \$2 million in 2015, according to estimates). A month after Spieth won the FedEx Cup, Greller was still making sense of the whirlwind year—and counting himself among the luckiest guys in the game.

It takes something special to reach a sixth-grader in the throes of a math meltdown. Did that job prepare you for caddying on Tour?

No matter how frustrated Jordan’s gotten in my three years with him, it’ll never compare to working with 12-year-olds and their frustration levels. As a teacher, my biggest priority was getting the kids to believe in themselves, and you can apply that skill directly to Jordan. My biggest role has been encouragement and getting him to believe in himself.

Self-belief goes both ways with you two guys, right?

It’s not just between us, it’s with his whole inner circle—his friends and family and agent. It’s how they treat me and [my wife] Ellie. It’s authentic. Jordan’s incredible in how he treats people. My parents came to Pebble Beach this year, and Jordan had dinner with us. He doesn’t have to do that. My brother happened to be in Dallas, and Jordan played golf with him. He’s very giving of his time. If he sees Ellie out there walking, he’ll ask about her. He cares. He’s a very inclusive person. People ask me, “Is that really Jordan?” I tell them, “He’s even nicer than he appears through your television.”

Nicer and funnier—or at least that’s how it appears. How does Jordan make you laugh?

He frequently talks about my bald spot, or “the Greller belly.” He likes to pick on me because I’m getting old, and I’m a step slower than him. We’ll do little competitions. We did a 100-yard dash at the British. It was right after we landed. We got off the charter and were waiting for our rental car. I thought I could beat him. I couldn’t. It’s a brotherly relationship. We played basketball. I had him down 8-4 and lost 11-8. He thinks it’s funny. There’s a lot of chirping, and I can’t back it up like I used to. I’ve never beaten him in Ping-Pong, and I consider myself a good player. At the Presidents Cup, in the team room, I had him down 20-18 but completely folded under the pressure. He gets in my head.

You credit Jordan for your success. You also give a nod to veteran caddies like Ben Crenshaw’s guy, Carl Jackson, who tutored you on the nuances of Augusta National. Jordan’s first career major came at the 2015 Masters. Did anyone print up those “Carl says” T-shirts that Jordan said would be fitting?

I just talked to Carl yesterday. And yes, I have two shirts that say, “Carl says.” I don’t know where they came from. Both years [that Jordan

QUIRKS OF GENIUS

Spieth gets the ball in the hole with great skill—and his fair share of kicking and screaming. Here are five of his on-course tics.

» On the tee, Spieth is a human bobblehead, cocking his noggin from setup to intended line. Ball. Target. Ball. Target. Ball. Swing.

» Let’s say that drive slides off his clubface and into the long stuff. Course marshals will wave in the wayward direction, but there’s no need. Spieth is already pointing, arm

locked like a drill sergeant, to the ball’s wonky line.

» Finally, he reaches the green. Spieth plumb-bobs like a 30-year pro, analyzing every angle. Between reads, he fondles the putterhead. Read the putt, clean the putterhead. Read it again, clean it again. Hey, it was clean a minute ago. It’s still clean.

» Eventually Spieth putts it, and occasionally his ball speeds past the hole. He quickly begins pumping the brakes—with his open hand, palm-down. It’s a moldy old *Soul Train* move. But then, he is on the dance floor.

» The Tour is littered with great ballstrikers. But Spieth stands out as a great ball *talker*.

has competed in the Masters], I spent a significant amount of time with Carl. The first year we sat at a picnic table and went over the entire yardage book. Here I am, a total nobody getting to go play-by-play through the book with the man whom I consider the greatest caddie ever at Augusta. That's powerful stuff. So throughout the tournament I'd say, "Carl says..." and fill in the blank. Even if he didn't say it, but I firmly believed what I was telling Jordan, I'd say, "Carl says." It's harder to argue with Carl Jackson than Michael Greller. The biggest thing Carl told me was, "Trust your instincts." I tried a "Carl says" at Hilton Head the week after the Masters, but Jordan called me on it. *[Laughs]*

Which other caddies have helped you out?

John Wood, Bones Mackay—I count them among my four or five mentors, guys who have given me tons of encouragement and advice over the years. Ted Scott and Colin Swatton are two of the others. All four of those guys just embraced me and my wife and made us feel like family. I'm only three years in here, and coming in as a total outsider can be overwhelming. But they've been incredible about mentoring both of us.

Major number two came at Chambers Bay, where there was a lot of negativity about the course. Was that hard to take as someone who once caddied regularly at Chambers and taught school around the corner in Gig Harbor?

What I've learned about U.S. Opens is that every year there's going to be controversy. For me it was pretty easy to block all that out because there were so many positives. I have great caddie memories there, going back to 2007. On every hole I saw faces I knew. And I got married there in 2013, up top by the clubhouse.

What were the keys to Jordan's win at Chambers?

On Friday, the 18th hole was

Among his directives: "Hit it wind, hit it wind." "Go hard. GO! Go hard." "Be enough. Be enough." "Hang on, hang on, hang on, STOP!" "Holy right." "Oh, Jordan!"

If we learned anything this past year, it's that Jordan Spieth has a way with words—and his own way of doing things. —Sean Zak



"JORDAN'S INCREDIBLE IN HOW HE TREATS PEOPLE. HE CARES. HE'S A VERY INCLUSIVE PERSON."

set up as a par 4, and we made double bogey—probably didn't make the best decisions. That was our front nine. We made the turn, got to No. 1, and there was a sucker pin where if you missed left you went like 50 yards down the hill. And Jordan hit a lob wedge that just hung on the left fringe. It was inches from going all the way down the hill and probably being a bogey, but he made the putt for birdie. And then, of course, after he double-bogeyed the 17th hole on the last day, he birdied 18. That captures his stubbornness and ability to come back. It shows how mentally tough he is. He did that all year.

What were some of his other great bounce-back moments?

Go back to Augusta, Saturday: He hasn't missed a shot, and he makes double bogey on 17 and misses right on 18. It feels like all the momentum is shifting to Justin Rose. And Jordan hits that flop shot from above the hole and makes the putt for par. St. Andrews: He four-putts No. 8 for double bogey and bounces back and birdies nine and 10. He just doesn't go away. *[Laughs]* That's what I love about him. He's got so much fight. He scratches and claws.

At the Valspar, he made some epic saves that led to his first win of the season.

We've got a one-shot lead, and Ryan Moore, on No. 6, holes out from the fairway for eagle. We're in the middle of the woods to the right of the fairway, and Jordan pitches out, then flies a wedge over the green. He hits a pretty good chip from an against-the-grain lie to eight to 10 feet away. He says, "Mike, I need your best read ever." *[Laughs]* He says that to me about once a week. And he makes the putt to save bogey, otherwise it would have been a four-shot swing. Then he makes up-and-downs on 16, 17 and 18. That win at the Valspar triggered everything that followed. You can see what it meant to his confidence.

Looking forward to 2016, can Jordan get even better?

Last year [2015] was probably one of the three greatest seasons in the history of golf. I don't think any of us have had a chance to think about what next year looks like. A couple of days ago I was telling my wife that my one caddie dream was to carry a bag at the U.S. Open at Chambers Bay. Now I have to reassess my goals, and I'm sure Jordan will do the same. One thing I know about him is that he's very rarely content. He's always going to challenge himself. He's going to challenge me. He wants to raise the bar, and I love that about him. He's a perfectionist. He's gonna push for more.



Spieth had a need for less speed at the '14 Pebble Pro Am.

Jordan Spieth

player
of the
year

«SPIETH'S UNIVERSE»

Top OF THE World

You don't become golf's biggest new superstar all by yourself. A constellation of key players (and a few very important things) make up Spieth's universe.

By Sean Zak



THE PUTTER

Spieth's flatstick goes by the name of "Scotty Cameron 009." If that sounds like a lethal secret agent, it is.



THE CRIB

In early 2015, Spieth shelled out \$2.3 million for a 7,400 sq. ft. estate not far from his family's home in North Dallas. If he needs pointers on pool maintenance, Shark Tanker Mark Cuban is just around the corner.



THE BUDS

Hays Myers (center), Eric Leyendecker (left) and Blaine Simmons (right) have been Spieth's closest friends since their high school days. The so-called "Three Musketeers" serve as an in-house distraction on stressful Tour stops.



THE SPONSOR

AT&T entered the Spiethosphere in May 2014, lending its name to his bag and good works. One popular TV spot features Jordan as the lead in AT&T's "It Can Wait" campaign against texting and driving.

THE PARENTS

There are deep athletic roots on the Spieth family tree. Jordan's father, Shawn, was a utility infielder and pitcher at Lehigh, and his mother, Chris, played hoops for Moravian College. When their son is on the course, they keep their distance. But greenside after a win, they're the first to get the sugar.



THE SIS

Spieth's toughest "critic" might be his younger sister, Ellie, who keeps big brother emotionally grounded—and on his toes. When Spieth falls short of a win, he has to pay the price: take Ellie shopping.

THE BRO

Jordan isn't the only jock in the Spieth family. His younger (and much taller) brother, Steven, is a 6-foot-6 guard at Brown, where he shoots 81 percent from the free-throw line. That makes two Spieths who are automatic from 15 feet.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: AP/PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT VICK; WHITE HOMES; @ERIC_LEYENDECKER; ROBERT BECK; MITCHELL LAYTON/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID J. GRIFFIN/CONSPICUOUS WIRE



THE JACKET (GREEN)

In April, Spieth took his favorite piece of outerwear on a jet-setting Masters victory tour: 24 interviews in NYC (Letterman chat included), stops at the RBC Heritage (T-11) and the Country Music Awards, and, later, a burnt-orange blowout at UT's Texas Memorial Stadium.



THE ALMA MATER

Spieth left UT Austin after just one year of college golf (a year that happened to include a national championship) but he'll be a Longhorn forever. Texas paid him back in style last September, when the university band spelled out his name on the field during its halftime show.

THE THREADS

Spieth was the first Tour pro to rock the Under Armour logo from head to toe. The relationship began in 2013, when the brand took a chance on a kid with all-American looks and a huge upside. They reupped in 2015 with a 10-year deal.



Annie Verret first took the spotlight at the 2013 Presidents Cup, where she rooted for her captain's-pick boyfriend, but they've been a twosome since high school. She's lovingly devoted to golf's future, as an event coordinator at The First Tee of Greater Dallas.



THE COACH

Aussie Cameron McCormick went from player to Dallas-based coach—a wise career move. He started guiding Jordan when the youngster was 12. (George W. Bush surely knows that he's McCormick's second-most important pupil.)

"THE 11s"

You know them by the mayhem they make on Twitter: smack talk, postings of embarrassing photos, and yes, even props when one of them plays well. They're the 11s—the group of young guns that includes Spieth, Justin Thomas (right), Daniel Berger, Emiliano Grillo, Ollie Schniederjans and Patrick Rodgers, all 2011 high school graduates. They may rule the Tour for the next decade.



THE MUSCLE

Trainer Damon Goddard (left) and physio guru Troy Van Biezen keep Spieth perfectly fit. And agent Jay Danzi fits Spieth's need for (in no particular order) a business wiz, a sounding board and a bouncer.



THE CADDIE

In 2013, Spieth's on-course consigliere, Michael Greller, ditched his day job as a grade-school teacher to don the coveralls full-time. Good call. In 2015, Greller personally bagged about \$2.14 million.





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Jordan Spieth

player
of the
year

«COMPLETELY CLUTCH»

the hunger game

There are guys who want it, and guys who *really* want it. The hungriest players often come from hardship. Not Jordan Spieth. The phenom was afforded opportunity and bathed in family love. So why does he play the game as if his soul is on fire?

By John McAlley

MIKE LAWRE/GETTY IMAGES



Spieth's superb season began at the Valspar, where a 12-footer on the 72nd hole propelled him into a playoff—and to the first of his five wins in 2015.



Late on Sunday at the Tour Championship, as he walked up the 15th fairway, Jordan Spieth was deep in prayer.

He'd plunged a fistful of daggers into his playing competitor, Henrik Stenson, and was in command, leading by three. Spieth's march into the history books was almost complete. What a year it was: a wire-to-wire Masters win, a thrilling U.S. Open victory, close finishes at the other

two majors, ascension to the top of the World Golf Ranking. And now, just minutes away, a \$10 million FedEx Cup win that would bring his Tour earnings for the year to a staggering \$22,030,465. Who could blame the 22-year-old for using this quiet time on the back nine at Atlanta's East Lake Golf Club to reflect on the years of practice, sacrifice, and family love and support that led to it?

In that solemn moment Spieth was praying, he said after the round. "I was praying that my ball was in the first cut or in the fairway.

"I was still on the grind," he insisted, racing past any suggestion that he'd been arranging his trophy case while still on the course. "It was far from over, because Henrik was in the fairway. I'm thinking, *He birdies there, he could make three birdies out of the last four holes. He's capable of doing that. Therefore, I need to go one under.* So I was hoping I had a chance to birdie 15, then make a few pars, and..."

"The guy's a competitor. He's just always hungry," Spieth's caddie, Michael Greller, said an hour earlier, seemingly as mystified

as the rest of us by his player's capacity to get at it—and stay at it. Taking in the chaotic scene on the 18th green, where Spieth hoisted both the Tour Championship and FedEx Cup trophies before a phalanx of cooing corporate sponsors and barking photographers, the comically stone-faced bag man brightened. "We're going to celebrate. And he may be a little bit tired this week, but by the time we get to South Korea he's going to be fired up again."

THE HUNGER. The burning that can't be extinguished. The capacity to be ferociously clutch, as he was time and time again in 2015. Where does it come from in Spieth? His persona says "Pardon me, ma'am," but his game is more like that Under Armour commercial in which a thousand Spieths come at you at once.

"I really don't know," says his friend Zach Johnson, fresh off a flight from South Korea, where he, Spieth and Team America won the Presidents Cup. "He's got these intangibles and this innate ability to get it done on the course. The hunger to get better and to win—a lot of guys have that. But Jordan has the ability to *execute* it, which is not normal. My caddie and I joke when I'm around the green pitching and chipping. We think, 'Jordan Spieth,' because he seems to make shots—a lot."

The kindling for Spieth's competitive fire was ignited early. Both of his parents were collegiate athletes, and at home in suburban Dallas his father played a very active role in his young son's sporting life. "His dad coached our baseball and basketball teams, and he was always around," remembers Spieth's childhood friend Jeff Schoettmer, who's now a bone-crunching middle linebacker for the North Carolina Tar Heels. "Anytime we'd want to take batting practice or hit fly balls he would always be the one to take us and work with us. I think his parents' love for sports really influenced [Jordan's drive]. Our group of friends growing up had a really big impact on it, too. We were competing in everything we did."

"I would think that from the time Jordan was old enough to know, he was playing to win," says Joey Anders, a golf instructor at Dallas's Brookhaven Country Club. Anders was 29, and a month or two into the job, when in the summer of 2002 Spieth's father arranged lessons for his 8-year-old in an Air Jordan cap. "The first individual golf lesson—I still remember it to this day, and there aren't many 8-year-olds I give lessons

to who I can remember 13 years later," he says. "It wasn't so much that he could hit the ball good. Lots of kids can do that. It was that he never hit the ball *bad*. That, and the types of questions he asked. He would want to know how to get different ball flights. He'd want to know why things happened. At one point I said to him, 'If you want to hit a draw, you've got to hit it a little bit flatter and more inside out,' and he turned to his dad and said, 'I *told* you I need to swing flatter.'"

Spieth's progress was steady and Anders was plenty impressed—with himself. "I got to thinking, *Hey, you're doing a pretty good job of*

this!" he says, laughing. "Now it's more than a decade later, and I don't have another Jordan. So it wasn't me, it was him."

By the time he'd reached his early teens, Spieth possessed a freakish work ethic and polish. "One morning I was at Brookhaven, getting ready to tee off, and from somewhere near the putting green I hear, 'Hey, Coach Ahern!'" remembers Fred Ahern, the longtime football guru at St. Monica, Spieth's school for grades 1 through 8. "Jordan was over there at 7:45 on a Sunday morning, by himself—no coach, no mom, no dad—and he's working on his putting. I mean, what kid in eighth grade does that? So he asks me, 'Are you going to play? Would you mind if I joined you?'" Obviously, from a talent standpoint, his game was impressive—especially his short game, even then. But I'd been playing golf every week for 30-plus years, and playing with Jordan was like playing with a pro—from the way he put on his glove to the way he pulled his clubs out of the bag, prepared for every shot, repaired his divots, raked his trap. I shot a 37 on the front and he shot a 34. I was 53 at the time, and he was 13."

Schoettmer's last competitive dustup with Spieth was at Brookhaven, too. They were high schoolers, and by now that fire was familiar. "I was out with two other buddies, and we happened to run into him," Schoettmer says. "He was on the course with his girlfriend, and we ended up playing a friendly match for a couple of holes: the three of us very decent golfers against Jordan and his girlfriend. She was horrible. She'd hit the ball 20 yards, then Jordan would follow it with this absolutely perfect shot. I don't remember if we kept score, but whenever he had a chance to win, he took it."

"YES OR NO?" Jimmy Roberts was quietly asked as he watched from just off the 18th green at East Lake. Spieth, in the last group of the day, had overcome poor ballstriking in his third round to scratch his way into a tie for the lead. Now he was standing over a 20-foot putt to take the lead entering Sunday. It was precisely the kind of dramatic moment the golf world had witnessed repeatedly during Spieth's incredible 2015 tear. But with the FedEx Cup on the line and his Player of the Year honors put in jeopardy by a hard-charging Jason Day, it seemed too spectacularly scripted for Spieth to pull off again.

Roberts, the measured and thoughtful analyst for NBC Sports, assessed the odds for a

APRIL 11



CLUTCH!

The Masters Augusta National

THIRD ROUND
18TH HOLE

After making a double bogey on 17, Spieth leaves himself an impossible flop shot (downhill lie, over a bunker to a sloping-away green) on 18. The sublime up-and-down secures his lead going into Sunday.



few seconds. With his eyes fixed on the green, he said, “Yes.” Spieth sent the ball toward the hole. When it rattled into the cup, Roberts looked up and cocked his head, as if to say, “He’s just that kind of special.”

“Actually, what I was thinking was, *This is a player who will do whatever is necessary*,” Roberts says later. “That’s a championship quality, and after the ball went in the hole, it was like, ‘Okay, I’m not surprised.’”

For more than three decades, Roberts’s front-row seat has given him a close-up look at scads of pro athletes. Many of them are great; it’s the rare one who plays better when the trophy is on the line. What’s the gift that makes certain golfers so money? “It’s somebody truly comfortable in the moment,” Roberts says, “and I think Jordan’s got that. He’s 22, and he doesn’t appear to be overwhelmed by the moment—he seizes it. His physical skills are apparent, but it’s something else. He’s not cocky, but he’s confident. The moment seems to fuel him. It doesn’t intimidate him in any way. Plenty of athletes say, ‘Yeah, I live for these moments.’ But for how many of them is that truly the case?”

Curt Sampson, the Dallas-based biographer of Ben Hogan and the author of *The Masters*, a searing 1998 bestseller that lifted the rock off the troublesome history of Augusta National, got his first look at Spieth’s game face at the 2010 HP Byron Nelson Championship. There, as a 16-year-old amateur, Spieth tied for 16th in his Tour debut. “On Tuesday and Wednesday, he was a little starstruck, amazed to be among his heroes,” Sampson recalls. “But then I saw him again on Thursday and all of that was over. The game was on, and his ‘aw-shucks’ was gone.”

Playing well in big moments—harnessing the mental toughness as only elite players can—isn’t always as simple, or as difficult, as being fearless. “Jack Nicklaus and Bobby Jones were so, so clutch,” Sampson says. “And if I’m not mistaken both of them said they were motivated by not wanting to look *foolish* out there. Foolishness aside, I think they really did have less fear than we mortals.”

For Spieth, it seems, the bigger the stage, the more comfortable he feels. Roberts speculates that the two-time major winner’s competitive hunger and unusual composure in pressure-packed situations can be traced back to something seminal. “I think to a certain degree, it’s the question of nature or nurture,” he says. “Athletes are born with some measure of [desire], and some of it is

FOR SPIETH, IT SEEMS, THE BIGGER THE STAGE, THE MORE COMFORTABLE HE FEELS.

learned because of the way they experience competition: the thrill they get out of winning. I’m guessing here, but with Jordan it might also have to do with the warmth of his family and the stability of his childhood. His dad’s a great guy, his mom—they’re normal people.”

The list of jocks who use sports as a corrective to complicated or traumatic early lives, and whose ego is disproportionately entangled with their performance on the field, is a long one. Roberts points to Tiger Woods, whom he holds in high esteem—perhaps especially because of the immense pressures and expectations he has shouldered from an impossibly young age. “For many of us, failure is a defeat,” Roberts says. “Maybe Jordan has been made to feel secure enough in himself that failure or losing won’t define him.”

TIGER. Will a golfer ever again be measured by any other standard? In the years since his peak, players have teased us with flashes of greatness, seemingly ready to dominate. Then

JULY 19



CLUTCH!

The Open Championship St. Andrews

FOURTH ROUND
16TH HOLE

As he goes for his third straight major win, Spieth’s 30-foot birdie putt ties him for the lead with two to play. But a bogey on 17 costs him a spot in the playoff.



OPPOSITE TOP: THOMAS LOVELOCK; BOTTOM: AP PHOTO/DAVID J. PHILLIP; THIS PAGE, TOP: FRED VUICH/ISI; BOTTOM: SAM GREENWOOD/GETTY IMAGES

24,152 golf balls later, and we have a work of art almost as amazing as Jordan Spieth's championship season.



*See how it was created in a downtown
Dallas park at [YouTube.com/ATT](https://www.youtube.com/ATT)*

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SEPTEMBER 27



Tour Championship

East Lake Golf Club

FOURTH ROUND
11TH HOLE

With the FedEx Cup on the line, Spieth's 46-foot birdie bomb crushes Henrik Stenson.



they lose their mojo. Adam Scott was meant to be the man but went major-free in his twenties. Now, at age 35, he has just one to his credit. After his runaway U.S. Open at Pinehurst, Martin Kaymer was meant to be the man, but he hasn't won on Tour since. Only a few years back, Luke Donald reached world No. 1 but now seems virtually invisible. Twelve months ago, Rory McIlroy appeared poised to rule the Tour for years, yet he never threatened in a major in 2015.

After the kind of domination Spieth showed this past season, it's impossible not to hold similar hopes for him. Are our expectations unrealistic? Despite our hunger for a hero, is the game's talent pool too deep for one player to rule? Are today's young golfers pulled in too many directions, or too well compensated to care? Or perhaps they're just not motivated to make the sacrifices necessary for mastery.

"I don't think it's any of those things," says Roberts. "Tiger is the paradigm. Go back to 1996. The PGA Tour Player of the Year was Tom Lehman. He won twice that year. That was the standard for the best. That was kind of normal, because golf's a hard game. You lose more than you win, by a lot. And along comes

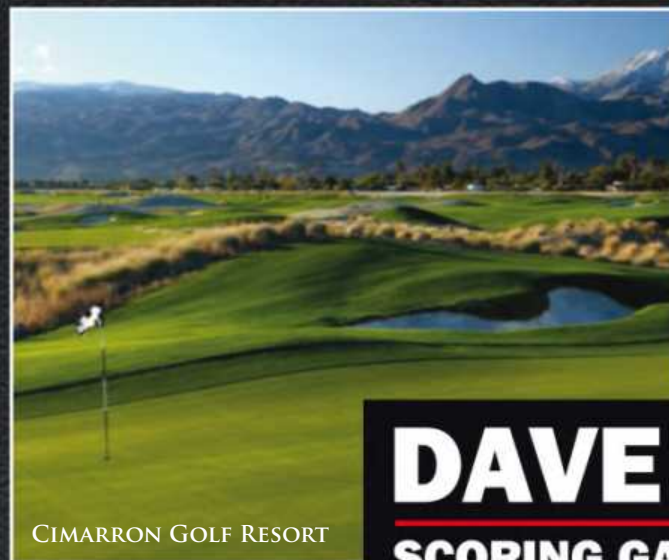
"JORDAN'S PROBABLY GOING TO GET BIGGER, STRONGER, LONGER," SAYS ZACH JOHNSON. "HE'S STILL YOUNG."

this young player, who changes our definition of what it means to be the best. And he wins five, eight, ten times in a year. And he does it for more than a decade. So a whole generation of sports fans comes to look at things differently. You're looking at something that only happens once a century, once in a lifetime, once every two lifetimes, who knows?"

Zach Johnson lived through the Tiger years, and even though he still has a bulldog in the race—named Zach Johnson—he'd be gassed to see the game ruled again by one transcendent talent. The guy? Woods himself. "I really hope there's another Tiger ascension," he says, "because I'd love for some of these young guys—Rory and Jordan and Jason Day, Rickie Fowler—to experience what Tiger did to us. Just like Jordan did this year, Tiger pushed the ceiling really high. Given an opportunity to compete against that [level of greatness], it becomes, How am I going to get better? How am I to succeed? How am I going to better myself so if I ever get a chance to play against that guy, how am I going to win?"

SO WHAT should we expect from Jordan Spieth in 2016? "I don't know if we'll see what we saw last season: two major wins and [him] contending in every major down to the last five or six holes," says Johnson. "I just can't explain that. I'm not sure we'll ever see that again. But he's one of those athletes we don't see often in any sport, let alone one where learning how to win—the intangibles of maturity and experience—takes time, and it just did not for him. So I expect him to win more golf tournaments, because now he knows how to, and he's driven. He's probably going to get bigger, he's probably going to get stronger, he's probably going to get longer. I mean, he's still young."

"What do I expect?" Curt Sampson asks. "Well, I'll say this. I was playing at Brook Hollow in Dallas, where Cameron McCormick, Spieth's coach, [was] a pro. It was a day or two after the Tour Championship, and I was in a cart driving to the practice range. In a cart coming in the other direction is Jordan Spieth. The glow was still there from winning the FedEx Cup, but he'd already been out there working. He's a glutton for hard work. So what do I expect next year? Another major, and for him to contend in the others. I mean, how can you not like the chances of a guy who acts sort of unhappy that his ball isn't already in the hole? 'What the hell is this?! An eight-footer? Get in the hole!'" **G**



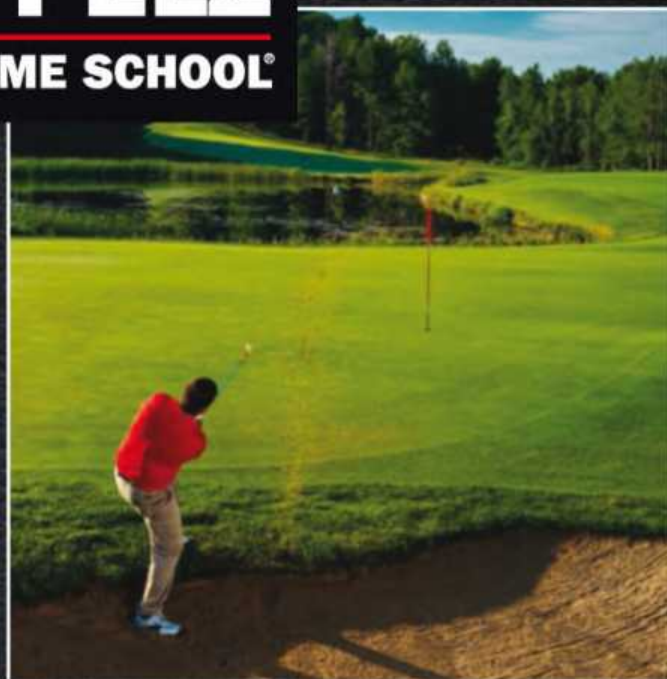
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Jordan Spieth

player
of the
year

«BY THE NUMBERS»

\$22,030,465

(and counting)

Spieth's year in numbers was, yes, off the charts.

By Jake Nichols



SIX

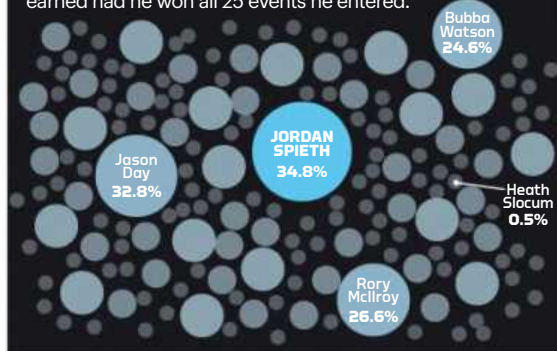
Weeks
spent
as the

#1

ranked
golfer
in the
world

OFFICIAL EARNINGS: BIGGEST BANK EVER

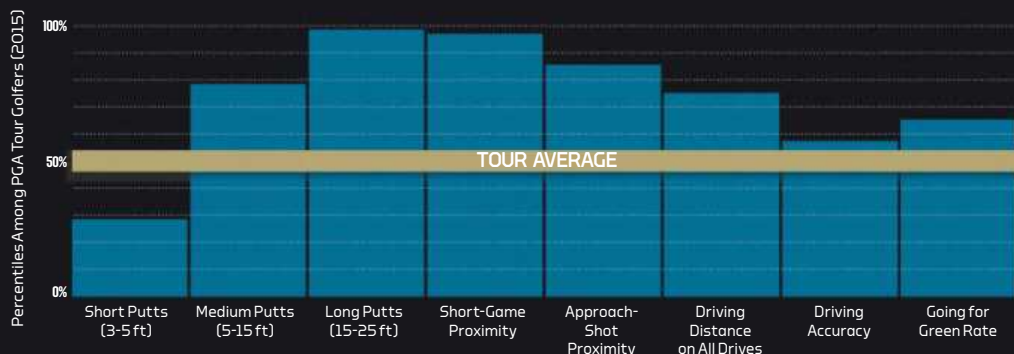
Spieth's \$12,030,465 in official prize money in 2015 was the largest take in Tour history. In the illustration below, each dot represents a Tour pro who played 40 or more rounds this season. The size of each dot indicates the percentage of the total available purse won—in Spieth's case, it was 34.8 percent of the maximum money he could have earned had he won all 25 events he entered.



5 Total victories

TEE TO GREEN: ALL-WORLD

When compared with the rest of the PGA Tour in eight key advanced stats, Spieth ranks above-average in seven of the eight categories. He's the best at holing long putts and is tied for second at short-game proximity.



72-hole
Masters
score:

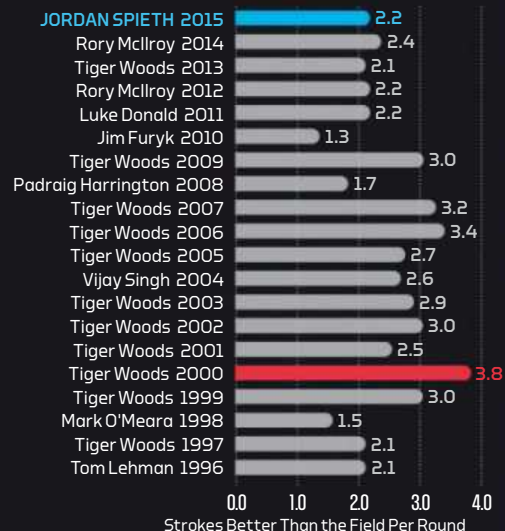
270

(Ties record set
by Tiger Woods
in 2000)

DOMINATION: NOT QUITE TIGER, BUT...

Stroke Differential to Field Average measures a golfer's scoring average versus the field's average in every round. Spieth's overall performance bested the field by 2.2 strokes per round. In 2000, Tiger Woods established the best recent mark (and likely the best ever), beating the field by 3.8 strokes per round.

Stroke differential per round (vs. field) for
PGA Tour Players of the Year since 1996:



15

TOP 10 FINISHES

4

2nd-place finishes

\$12,030,465

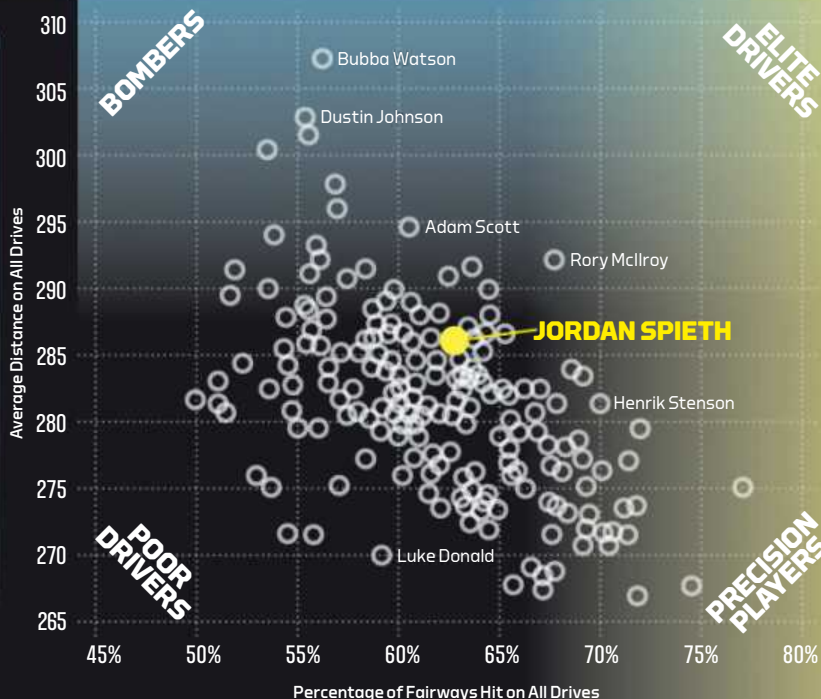
OFFICIAL MONEY EARNED

PLUS: \$10,000,000 BONUS FOR WINNING THE FEDEX CUP

DRIVING PERFORMANCE: ROADWORTHY

Elite drivers tend to be either extremely long, like Dustin Johnson, or extremely accurate, like Henrik Stenson. Very few golfers combined the distance and accuracy that Spieth delivered off the tee in 2015.

Driving distance and driving accuracy for all Tour Golfers in 2015:



Scoring Metrics

1st

SCORING AVERAGE
(68.938)

PUTTS PER ROUND
(27.82)

ONE-PUTT PERCENTAGE
(44.26%)

PUTTING FROM 20-25 FEET
(25.93%)

PAR-4 SCORING*
(3.93 strokes)

2nd

BIRDIE PERCENTAGE
(25.6% of holes)

BOGEY PERCENTAGE
(13.1% of holes)

4th

STROKES GAINED:
TEE TO GREEN (+1.51)

SCRAMBLING (65.03%)

6th

TOTAL BIRDIES (396)

8th

STROKES GAINED:
PUTTING (+0.57)

*TIED FOR FIRST WITH JASON DAY

Watch the Birdie

Spieth was simply spectacular on the greens last year, topping multiple putting stats. Use his moves—like his quirky habit of looking at the cup on some strokes—to hole more rolls.

In an award-winning 2005 story in GOLF, we showed that looking at the hole when striking the ball can improve distance control. You might say we opened some eyes—maybe even those of a 12-year-old Jordan Spieth, who often watches the cup on short putts. Now, a decade after our initial study, brand-new research reveals how to use this stroke-saving method to get Jordan-like dominance on the greens.

By David DeNunzio

THE EYES HAVE IT
Spieth often watches the hole on shorter putts. Take our test to see if this method will work for you.





GOOD READ

Our 2005 story on looking at the hole while putting won critical acclaim.

Spieth's penchant for (sometimes) watching the hole while making his stroke first made headlines on Thursday at the 2014 Masters. The steely-eyed Texan stared down a number of short ones—and *kept* staring when making his stroke—en route to a 71. The media was shocked. Not us. Ten years ago, we commissioned a study by Bob Christina, dean emeritus of the School of Health and Human Sciences at UNC-Greensboro, and Top 100 Teacher Eric Alpenfels of the Pinehurst Golf Academy. Our two experts proved that looking at the hole when making a stroke can be very effective. Test subjects who watched the hole rolled long putts (28 to 43 feet) 24 percent closer than volunteers who putted conventionally. The method also worked on three- to eight-foot putts, the data showed. Our October 2005 feature won GOLF a National Magazine Award. We're proud to be the only golf publication ever to receive magazine publishing's most coveted honor.

A New Look at LOOKING AT THE HOLE

Eyeing the hole while putting is nothing new. Bobby Locke, arguably the greatest putter in history, dabbled in it. So did Hall of Famer Johnny Miller during his battle with the yips in the late 1970s and early '80s. Ray Floyd, Jim Thorpe and Louis Oosthuizen have been caught looking at the hole, but not to the extent that Spieth does it.

Oddly, Spieth only focuses on the hole on shorter putts, not on 20-footers, where his make percentage is miles above the PGA Tour average. It makes you wonder: If he looked at the hole from that longer distance, could he be even *more* dominant on the greens? Our curiosity got the better of us, so we decided to test 20-footers. Top 100 Teacher Jon Tattersall and his

associates at Fusion ATL in Atlanta asked 19 weekend players to roll three different 20-foot putts while looking at the hole. After charting the results, the subjects rolled three more 20-footers while looking at the ball. As was the case in our 2005 study, looking at the hole—what Christina calls “instinct putting”—won the day. **Our testers rolled putts about a foot closer when they looked at the hole, compared with when they used the conventional technique** (graph, lower right).

A foot may not sound like much, but think about it: With \$20—and bragging rights—riding on it, would you rather have a four-footer or a five-footer? “What’s more,” Tattersall says, “very few of the ‘instinct’ putts came up short.” This is critical, especially if you three-putt a lot. Looking at the hole helps you tap into your natural instinct, which gives you a better chance

to get the ball all the way to the hole. Adds Christina, “As they say, ‘Never up, never in.’”

The study in action.



SHOULD YOU LOOK?

Unless your last name is Faxon or Crenshaw, it's worth trying. Almost every stroke needs help. Christina recommends at least *practicing* your putting while looking at the hole. That's because...

A separate study showed that looking at the hole in practice improved overall putting performance when looking at the ball by

27%

Should you look at the hole when you're on the course? It's worth a one-round experiment, at least. For advance tips and help with technique, read *Instinct Putting*, by Alpenfels and Christina. In the meantime, put your stroke to the test on the practice green. “The stats speak for themselves, but you have to prove it to yourself,” Christina says.

TAKE THE TEST

Find a short (under 10 feet) putt on the practice green. Putt two balls; look at the hole on the first putt (or at your aim point, if the putt breaks), and look at the ball on the second one. Do likewise for a medium-length (10 to 20 feet) and a long (over 20 feet) putt. Repeat six times from different distances within each range (short, medium and long) for a total of 18 “rounds” (36 putts). Keep track of which ball—look or no-look—ends up closer to the hole each time. The second ball should win or tie most of the holes, since you're using your regular technique and you can “go to school” on the first putt. But if your first ball wins, there's reason to question your current stroke—and looking at the hole when you play may be the right move for you.



master strokes

Three Top 100 Teachers explain Spieth's greatness on the greens. Use these moves to pour them in all day, just like Jordan.

By David DeNunzio

THE EIGHT-FOOT par-save that Jordan Spieth canned on the final hole of the Tour Championship was his 2,448th—and final—putt of the year. It seemed destined to drop. Last year, nobody drained a higher percentage of first putts than Spieth, and his 44.3 one-putt rate beat the Tour average by nearly six points. It was one of several gaudy putting stats he posted in 2015 (see table, below), a collection of double-take-inducing numbers that fueled the greatest putting season in recent memory.

Three of today's brightest putting minds dig deep into Spieth's motion for his success secrets. Each shares one key move that together combine to make pure strikes almost automatic for any player. Tired of three-putting or missing birdie chances? Practice these teacher-tested tips and you'll be the *Putter* of the Year in your foursome.

FIRST IN CLASS

The putting stats that fueled Spieth's season

Category	Rank	Value
One-Putt Percentage	1st	44.3%
One-Putts Per Round	1st	7.97
Putts Per G.I.R.	1st	1.699
Overall Putting Average	1st	1.545
Putts Per Round	1st	27.82

1 »

BACKSTROKE

SPIETH'S MOVE

"Brisk"

putterhead speed

WHAT IT DOES

Produces

squarer strikes

I love the way he quickly starts the putter away from the ball—it's the opposite of the "low-and-slow" takeaway that weekend players make. Slow backstrokes tend to create short backstrokes, and that can make you over-accelerate on the forward-stroke, or "hit" the ball. That kills touch and makes squaring the face at impact—the key on short putts—next to impossible. So take it back briskly like Jordan. Your backstroke will get longer, but you'll swing more smoothly and hole more putts.

—James Sieckmann

Shadow Ridge C.C.,
Omaha, Neb.





«2

FORWARD-STROKE

SPIETH'S MOVE

Putting with gravity

WHAT IT DOES

Gives you perfect distance control

As he completes his transition, Spieth simply lets gravity pull the putterhead down and through the ball. There's not much "hitting" or "popping." This allows him to generate the same force at impact—and the same amount of roll—for any stroke length.

You know you've given in to gravity if your putterhead finishes past your left foot (photo, left) but you've barely moved a muscle.

—**Scott Munroe**
Nantucket G.C.,
Siasconset, Mass.



3

ROUTINE

SPIETH'S MOVE Commitment

WHAT IT DOES Gives you the confidence to sink any putt

Last year, Jordan three-putted 38 times out of 1,584 holes. Incredible. His key to consistency? He reads every putt based on the speed he wants to hit the ball—from trickling it in over the front edge to jamming it into the back of the cup. Then, once he picks a speed, he commits. That's huge. This eliminates the doubt that can cause deceleration, hand manipulation and the yips. Spieth's confidence and commitment on the green are at levels we haven't seen since Tiger Woods in his prime. Adopt Jordan's mindset. You won't make every putt, but by focusing on speed, you'll make a lot more, and you'll always be hole-high.

—**Mike Adams** Medalist G.C., Hobe Sound, Fla.

"SPIETH HAS A CONFIDENCE ON THE GREENS WE HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE TIGER IN HIS PRIME."

CENTER: ANGUS MURRAY (2); UPPER RIGHT: CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

EDITED BY ROB SAUERHAFT

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TheShop

The Best New Gear

Nike

DEEP BLUE

Nike's new Vapor Fly is lighter—and longer—than ever

By Michael Chwasky and Mark Dee



VAPOR FLY DRIVER

\$350; GOLF.com/nike

Shaving 30 percent off the crown weight from last year's Vapor Speed driver let Nike's engineers shift five grams from the top of the head to the low perimeter. From there, the new, lower CG promotes higher-launching shots and greater carry for everyday players. Plus, the club's updated sole construction—the reinforced back is a lot stiffer than the flexible compression channel near the face—contributes to faster ball speeds. That's because the walls of the updated channel are 25 percent thinner, which helps shots struck low on the face carry more like sweet-spot strikes. The edges of the face are 0.3 mm thinner, too, making it more responsive on off-center hits. Compared with its predecessor, the draw-bias Vapor Fly generates an extra 1 mph on center strikes, 0.5 mph low on the face and 0.9 mph off the toe. Vapor Fly maintains Nike's familiar cavity-back design to boost head stability, and it also uses the same adjustable hosel as Vapor Speed. The system allows you to tune in loft (8.5° to 12.5°) and face angle for directional changes.

THIS PAGE: MANFRED KOH (2)

» Nike's R&D team was given an important assignment: Help Rory McIlroy drive it even farther. Mission accomplished. His new gamer, the Vapor Fly Pro, bought him an extra 3 mph of ball speed, which could mean a double-digit distance gain. McIlroy's not the only one who can benefit from Nike's up-tempo designs. The company has tailored its technologies to fit two additional drivers, plus a full complement of fairway woods and hybrids (in stores January 29). This year, Vapor is lighter across the board, with slimmer crowns and livelier faces to help your shots "Fly."



« VAPOR FLY PRO DRIVER

\$400

Rory's new 460 cc gamer has many of the same design features as Vapor Fly, right down to the lightweight crown, updated compression channel, reinforced cavity and adjustable-loft system. But this is a more compact package, with a lower natural flight and slightly less spin. The pear-shaped head also has a neutral shot bias.

There's also a third driver, the Vapor Flex 440 (\$500), set to come out in early March. It's built for stronger players who'd benefit from a very low-spin offering. (Look for that one in next month's GOLF.)



VAPOR FLY FAIRWAY WOODS

\$250

With the Vapor Fly, you can swing the same club on Sunday mornings that Nike's Tour staff swings on Sunday afternoons. How does it keep players of all levels happy? By slimming down. A thinner, lighter stainless steel crown than the one found in last year's Vapor Flex and Vapor Speed woods helps to drop the CG, which leads to higher-launching shots. The channel along the sole is 25 percent thinner, too, adding flexibility for faster ball speeds. And Nike's slimmer "FlexLoft" adjustable hosel can change loft by a degree stronger or weaker at either standard or upright lie angles. Lofts include 13° (3+), 15° (3), 17° (3HL), 19° (5) and 21° (7).



« VAPOR FLY HYBRIDS

\$220

Dropping three grams off the crown leads to a lower CG and higher-flying shots. As with its big brothers, the stainless steel head utilizes an updated channel to improve contact on thin shots, but unlike those clubs, it doesn't offer an adjustable hosel. Comes in 17°, 20°, 23° and 26° lofts.

THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: BRIAN HENIN (2); CARLOS M. SAAVEDRA (5)

NIKE VAPOR FLY »

\$799, steel; \$899, graphite; GOLF.com/nike

No one needs more forgiveness than 12-plus-handicappers, the Vapor Fly's target audience. For them, help is on the way. A lightweight carbon-fiber material behind the face saves 14 grams (compared with steel) and shifts the CG lower and deeper. It ends up near the center of the head, improving stability and feel and creating a clean energy transfer at impact. Shots launch on average 1° higher with three yards more carry than Vapor Speed irons. A reinforced toe area aids face flex for better ball speeds on misses. The hollow-bodied 3- through 7-irons blend nicely with standard cavity-back short irons. Both the Vapor Fly and more compact Vapor Fly Pro reach stores January 29.



XXIO 9

\$849, steel; \$1,049, graphite; GOLF.com/equipment

For shots that get airborne faster and stay there longer, the high-launching, forgiving XXIO 9 might be your stick. The key? The heavy, tungsten-weighted head, which is two grams heavier than the XXIO 8 thanks to tungsten in the heel, toe and sole. The head pairs with a high-balance-point shaft, resulting in faster swings and more yards. A cup-face design with varying thicknesses increases flexibility in the heel and toe, leading to more ball speed and higher launch on off-center strikes.

WILSON STAFF FG TOUR F5

\$899, steel; \$999, graphite; GOLF.com/wilson

Forged from carbon steel, these sticks are meant for skilled players who want a distance jolt along with the smooth feel and feedback of a traditional design. The F5 borrows its sole technology from the company's game-improvement D200 irons. Thinning out where the bottom of the face meets the sole helps to increase flex—and with it, distance—on thin contact. And a stabilizing bar in the cavity supports the thin face and improves consistency across the hitting area, without reducing face flex or ball speed.

» A new year means new irons, and a wide range of sticks are about to hit the market. Some are cutting-edge designs that chase maximum distance and forgiveness, while others are more traditional, promising supreme feel and accuracy. Find the set to help you make 2016 your best year yet.

Weapons

SIX NEW MODELS

By Michael Chwasky

TOUR EDGE EXOTICS EXI »

\$599, steel; \$699, graphite;
GOLF.com/touredge

Featuring a traditional profile with minimal offset, the cavity-back EXi has a low and deep CG to boost forgiveness on off-center strikes. By pairing the cavity design with sole slots and a multi-thickness face, Tour Edge produced an iron that generates faster ball speed, higher launches and longer carries than any Exotics yet. Plus, the club houses a new insert in the cavity that dampens vibration for a softer feel. The irons are also available as a combo set with 3- and 4-hybrids.



» SRIXON Z945

\$999, steel; GOLF.com/srixon

These musclebacks, forged from soft carbon steel, have a thin topline and minimal offset. The beveled sole features more bounce on the leading edge with less bounce on the trailing one, allowing it to pass easily through the turf. Double-laser-milled grooves maintain their sharpness longer than traditional forgings. These are only available in limited numbers, so you'll want to demo a set sooner rather than later.



» COBRA KING F6

\$799, steel; \$899, graphite; GOLF.com/cobra

Cobra goes progressive with the King F6. The long irons (3-5) have a hollow body for maximum distance and forgiveness, the mid-irons (6-7) are a half-hollow construction to blend distance and control, and the cavity-back short irons (8-PW) add versatility. Milled grooves optimize spin rates across the three designs, while an aluminum insert in the long- and mid-iron cavities shifts mass lower for higher-launching shots. Channels around the perimeter of the face and in the sole push forgiveness even further, increasing face flex for faster ball speeds on misses.

of Choice

TO HELP YOU MAKE '16 OH SO SWEET

» What's new in the new year? Simplicity—on the course and in the pro shop. More manufacturers are changing the way they make fairway woods, producing single models that fit many different swings and playing styles. The goal? To make it easy to select a club off the shelf. This means that better players can expect a little help on tough mornings, while average Joes can buy clubs that will grow with their games. Here are five fairway woods to give you new hope in the coming year.

FAIR PLAY

Five fairway woods put the fun back in your long game

By Mark Dee



« MIZUNO JPX-EZ

\$250; GOLF.com/mizuno

With a bigger, broader footprint than the previous model, the JPX-EZ is an MOI monster. The key to this game-improvement design is in the "Shock Wave" ridges on the sole, which the EZ borrows from its slightly sterner fraternal twin, the JPX-850. To help the face flex, Mizuno extended the ridges out to the EZ's heel and toe. That means a higher COR—and more ball speed—across the bottom of the face. It also pushes extra weight to those areas, bolstering MOI to prevent twisting on heel/toe contact. All that makes the EZ, well, easier than ever to use. In company testing, it also launches higher and spins less than the JPX-850, so it can stand up to faster swings. The 15°, 18° and 21° heads come with a Quick Switch hosel capable of tweaking loft +/- 2°.



» COBRA KING F6

\$240; GOLF.com/cobra

When Cobra replaced its Fly-Z and Fly-Z+, it took a Goldilocks approach: Everything had to be just right. The 170 cc King F6 sizes up between its predecessors, and a 20-gram sole weight can move forward and back to replicate the performance of both. With the weight in back, the club performs like a smaller Fly-Z, only better; the new setup scrubs roughly 350 rpm of spin while helping to boost MOI by 5 percent. In front, the F6 spins 100 rpm less than the Fly-Z+, with an 8 percent higher MOI. A thinner, 475 stainless steel face makes the F6 longer, too: In company testing, it flew five yards past the Fly-Z (with the weight back), and two yards farther than the Fly-Z+ (with the weight front). Like the Fly-Zs, King F6 features an eight-setting adjustable hosel and Cobra's SmartPad sole. Available January 15.



« WILSON STAFF FG TOUR F5

\$230; GOLF.com/wilson

According to Wilson's brass, the F5 is for players who prioritize feel and control over sheer distance. That didn't stop the company from upgrading the engine behind last year's M3 fairway wood, and extra power means that more players can give the Tour club a try. A new, 455 Carpenter steel face insert boosts ball speed over last year's model, while the CG moves lower and closer to the face to optimize launch and decrease spin. For tinkerers, the F5 features an adjustable seven-gram sole weight (3- and 11-gram weights are available through custom order), as well as a Fast Fit hosel that can change loft -1° to $+2^{\circ}$. In stores January 8.

TOUR EDGE EXOTICS EX9 »

\$230; GOLF.com/touredge

Meet the most approachable member of the Exotics line. The EX9 adds a new dimension—and a lower price point—to Tour Edge's power-hungry stable of fairway woods. The company elongated the club's profile to pull the CG farther from the face than in last year's Exotics E8 to bolster forgiveness. The sloped crown leads to better aerodynamics and more speed. A distilled version of the wavy "SlipStream" sole helps the club glide through the ground (especially on heavy contact), and an interchangeable weight in the heel provides draw bias. It all results in a solid choice for mid- to high-handicappers.

And fans of previous Exotics models shouldn't fret: With a Carpenter steel cup face, backed by a flexible "Power Grid" channel, the EX9 keeps the high-horsepower motor of its higher-priced siblings.



« PXG 0341

\$500; GOLF.com/equipment

Clubmakers rarely use the word "sexy" in a mission statement, but it shouldn't surprise those familiar with PXG chief and GoDaddy founder Bob Parsons. (Remember GoDaddy's titillating Super Bowl ads featuring Danica Patrick?) Named after the Marine Corps code for a mortarman, the 0341 is studded with 11 weight ports, allowing players to position five 2.5-gram tungsten and six half-gram titanium screws any way they see fit to make the ball fly high, low, left or right. The plugs sit flush against the sole in a stainless steel body, keeping the CG—and the spin—down. A super-thin maraging steel face provides the pop, while an adjustable hosel can alter loft $\pm 1.5^{\circ}$. This midsize head fits a wide range of players, but it's only available direct from the company or through select clubfitters.



GOLD

Where The Game Meets The Good Life

EXPERIENCES

Finally, a New Year's resolution we know you'll keep. Treat yourself to a special golf experience in 2016, no matter how much you have to spend. From playing Pebble to lessons from Jordan Spieth's coach, here are 15 great ways to invest your hard-earned golf dollars.

By Joe Passov

How to Spend...

\$1,000

\$5,000

\$10,000

(Yep, on golf!)



5 WAYS TO SPEND \$1,000

The more rounds you play
at majestic Bandon Dunes,
the better the value.

1 Bandon on a Budget

The ultimate U.S. buddies' golf trip destination for a grand? Well, sort of. For that buy-in, you won't be staying on property or hiring caddies, but you can still enjoy a superb Bandon experience. Ten Franklins will cover your fees for a round on all four courses over two days in the prime months of June through September, thanks to the \$155 replay rate for golf-only day guests. For just another couple of hundred bucks per night via Airbnb, you and your foursome can bunk in a cozy coastal bungalow a few miles away. bandondunesgolf.com

2 Island Hopping

Your education as a golfer is incomplete until you've stared down golf's ultimate gut check, the par-3 17th at the Stadium course at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. If your pulse doesn't race at the prospect of dueling with Pete Dye's original island green, ask a doctor to check your vitals. The rest of the course is no slouch either—it bursts with variety. To play here, you'll need to stay on-site at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. In the prime time of March and April, the resort's Stadium Golf Experience offers deluxe accommodations, breakfast and one round at the Stadium for \$634-\$654. Direct flights from NYC area airports to Jacksonville in March and April range from \$250-\$370, so expect to spend around \$1,000 to conquer (or cower at) Sawgrass. Have a travel partner? A package for two runs \$989-\$1,009 in the spring and less at other times of year. marriott.com

3 Four Hours with Jordan Spieth's Coach

Private lessons are a reliable path to game improvement—and game enjoyment—so invest in some enlightenment from one of golf's hottest teachers, Cameron McCormick. Jordan Spieth's lifelong coach lives in Dallas, and in early 2016 he'll move just south of downtown to spanking-new Trinity Forest G.C., a slick Bill Coore/Ben Crenshaw design and the future home of the PGA Tour's AT&T Byron Nelson. Not all swing-gurus-to-the-stars offer instruction to the masses, and certainly not at McCormick's reasonable rate. He'll work with you for \$250 an hour, but book now, because he tells us the price of admission will likely rise soon. cameronmccormickgolf.com

INSERT
YOU
HERE

Picture this:
McCormick
working
with...you!

5 WAYS TO SPEND
\$1,000

Pebble awaits.
It's time you
paid a visit.



4 Dream Round

If you're a red-blooded American golfer, you must make a Pebble Beach pilgrimage at least once. For advance tee times, you'll have to stay on property—a superb, if pricey, experience. (Packages start at \$3,745.) If you stay elsewhere, you can call one day ahead and (maybe) get lucky. As is the case at the Old Course at St. Andrews, you'll have a better shot making the tee sheet as a single—try during quieter times of year, such as January or over the July 4 holiday. Green fees are \$495, plus \$40 for a cart, but walk and take a caddy instead. It's \$80 per bag, plus a recommended average gratuity of \$35-\$55. You'll have just enough left to play Spyglass Hill for \$395. Or enjoy Spanish Bay for \$270 and then celebrate at the ultimate 19th hole, the mahogany-lined Tap Room at the Lodge at Pebble Beach. pebblebeach.com

5 Watch an Open, Then Play an Open Course

Some call it the British Open, others the Open Championship. We call it a blast. This July it returns for the ninth time to rumpled, regal Royal Troon. The Open truly is open: You can stroll up to the gate and buy a ticket for any round for about 100 bucks. This leaves you a chunk of change to feast on Scotland's golf-rich west coast. Start at the newly Trumpified Turnberry Ailsa course. You'll pay about \$390 during Open week to play the Watson-Nicklaus "Duel in the Sun" venue. Next, head to quirky Prestwick, site of 24 Opens and an all-you-can-play weekday rate of \$317. Last up: one of Scotland's great unheralded tracks, Western Gailes. Bring your appetite: The \$209 green fee includes a two-course lunch. theopen.com

5 WAYS TO SPEND **\$5,000**

1 Two Words: The. Masters.

Dreaming about strolling Augusta National's verdant grounds is a tradition unlike any other. It's time to make it a reality. Brokers sell Monday practice-round tickets for under \$400. For the four tourney rounds, StubHub currently has a per-badge price of \$4,849, while TicketCity has six badges from \$4,600/per. Lock in that price and you'll have enough left over for a 12-ounce Prime Rib (\$21.95) at TBonz (the best people-watching eatery in town) and a round of golf. No, not at Augusta—at Forest Hills Golf Club, a 1926 Donald Ross design, where \$140 buys you golf, range balls and lunch. Can we get an Amen?

2 Two More Words: Ryder Cup.

Minnesota might not top your bucket list, but in 2016, it should. Hazeltine National in suburban Minneapolis will host the Ryder Cup in late September. Let Premier Golf, the PGA of America's exclusive distributor of official Ryder Cup packages, do your heavy lifting. For \$4,895 (or \$3,595 per person, double occupancy), you'll get four nights at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis, along with breakfast, a Ryder Cup season ticket (Thursday through Sunday), round-trip transport, welcome reception and a Ryder Cup gift. (Which we assume isn't a hug from Ian Poulter.) One potential upgrade includes the option to add an extension that lets you tee it up at Ryder Cup venues such as Kiawah Island, Pinehurst and Whistling Straits. premiergolf.com

At Monarch Beach,
they'll treat you like
a Tour pro—minus
the autographs.



3 Get Pampered Like a Pro

Elite Tour pros enjoy state-of-the-art clubfitting and luxurious lodging. Get the same treatment with the Fit Fore VIPs package at the St. Regis Monarch Beach in SoCal (starting at \$1,630). You'll be chauffeured to the headquarters of Titleist, TaylorMade or Callaway for a custom fitting using the same technology the pros use. Also included is a sweet suite for two nights at the St. Regis, unlimited golf at its RTJ Jr. design, and club rentals while your shiny new sticks are being built. A set of clubs for you and your spouse, meals and airfare from most cities will total about \$5,000. stregismb.com





**YOU
ARE
HERE!**

Fan-tastic! Few golf experiences rival a front-row Masters seat.

4 Get Fit Like a Pro

If you're serious about lowering your scores by boosting your athleticism, pack your workout gear—and your sticks—for Scottsdale. The Exos Golf Experience Powered by Troon is tailored to help you achieve peak performance. (Ask Graham DeLaet, Ricky Barnes and James Hahn, who are among the Tour pros who train there.) Over three days, you'll be tested and counseled on nutrition, mindset, movement and recovery. Then you'll hit the TrackMan at acclaimed Troon North for high-tech swing analysis under the tutelage of Top 100 instructor Tim Mahoney. The cost: \$2,995.

Add airfare from most major cities and three nights' lodging at the Four Seasons Scottsdale at Troon North and you'll come in right on budget. pages.teamexos.com/golf



**Muscle up
your game at
the high-tech
Exos facility in
Scottsdale.**

5 The Ultimate Vegas Weekend

Start at the Butch Harmon School of Golf at Rio Secco GC outside Vegas. The two-day package is \$3,900 and includes three nights at Caesars Palace, two days of tutelage with Butch and his staff pros, a nine-hole playing lesson at Rio Secco with staff pros, lunch each day with Butch and his team, plus transportation. Test your tuned-up game with a round at Rio Secco (\$109-\$199) and another at Caesars' premier course, Cascata (\$275-\$395). With airfare, you're looking at about five grand all in, but hey—one good night at the tables and you'll win it right back. butchharmon.com

5 WAYS TO SPEND \$10,000



Talk about making an entrance.

1 Heli-Golf in Ireland

Who needs the stress of driving on Ireland's winding country roads when you can fly over them? Your 10-day PerryGolf adventure starts in Belfast. The road-trip portion features Royal Portrush and Royal County Down, both ranked in the world's top 15, followed by Portmarnock in Dublin. Two days later, you'll climb aboard a helicopter and travel to Old Head, then to Trump International in Doonbeg. Day 8 is a showstopper, with a morning chopper ride to Tralee, an afternoon round at Ballybunion, then a flight back to Doonbeg. Cap it off with a round at charming Lahinch. While traveling Tiger-style will run you \$10,000, at least you won't get charged for dinging up a rental car. perrygolf.com

2 Something Old, Something New

Tee times at the Old Course at St. Andrews are one of golf's hottest commodities. Guarantee one with a PerryGolf tour. The Classic Scotland package (\$6,995 per golfer) kicks off at two fabled Open venues, Royal Troon and newly refurbished Turnberry. (Note: Troon will be off-limits when it hosts the Open in mid-July, and Turnberry's Ailsa course doesn't reopen until June.) Next up: rugged Carnoustie, followed by the crown jewel, the Old Course, with killer Kingsbarns as your kicker. To arrive refreshed, treat yourself to business-class airfare (NYC to Glasgow) for about \$3,100. perrygolf.com

5 **WAYS TO SPEND**
\$1,000

The *Sea Cloud II* sails in style to the best tracks in France and Italy.

3 Chips Ahoy!

For golf-loving couples, a French and Italian Riviera Kalos Golf Cruise on the *Sea Cloud II* is the ultimate indulgence. Pair sightseeing in Nice, Monte Carlo and St. Tropez with golf in Cannes, Corsica, Sardinia and more. Of course, life on this 47-cabin floating country club is so kick-back great that you may never go ashore—or home! Rates start at \$8,265 per person. With economy airfare from most major U.S. cities, you're looking at 10 grand all in. A three-day extension to Lake Como starts at \$2,895 per person. (Give our best to the Clooneys.) kalosgolf.com



4 'Game' Time in South Africa

Watch the Big Three in action. No, not Jack, Arnie and Gary... lions, elephants and giraffes! This exotic 13-day PerryGolf excursion features top-ranked tracks such as Fancourt (Links), site of the 2003 Presidents Cup, cliff-top Pinnacle Point and seaside Humewood. You'll tour wineries, cruise a harbor to see Cape fur seals, and conclude the trip with a safari at Shamwari Game Reserve, featuring morning and evening game drives, interpretive bush walks and dinners under the stars. The cost for a golfer is \$5,350. Add in meals, tour options and airfare and you'll ring up close to \$10,000. perrygolf.com

Tired of seeing boring old squirrels and geese on your fairways? This tour's for you!

5 Witness Golf's Return to the Olympic Games

As golf prepares for its first appearance in the Summer Olympics in more than a century—what, you don't remember George Lyon's 1904 gold-medal triumph?—ticket demand has skyrocketed for the Rio games. Day passes, ranging from \$25 for Rounds 1 through 3 to \$51 for the Medal rounds, were distributed by lottery and went fast. But there's hope. CoSport, the exclusive U.S. distributor of Olympics tickets, is offering packages with three-star hotel lodging in Flamengo, Ipanema and Copacabana and tickets for the first three men's rounds or rounds 3 and 4 of the women's event. At press time, men's prices started at \$8,140.50, women's at \$6,173.50. With airfare, meals and sightseeing you're looking at 10 large—but you'll have a front-row seat to history. cosport.com



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GOLF

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GOLF WITH A LITTLE BITE

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FASTEST MAN ALIVE
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TRIPLE CROWN
GREATEST SHOOTER

A DEFINING YEAR IN SPORTS

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JANUARY 2016

LESSONS

FOR MORE INSTRUCTION THAT FITS YOUR GAME, GO TO GOLF.COM



HIGH HANDICAPPER

You have potential but must fix some fundamental swing flaws.

CLIP YOUR WING—AND YOUR SLICE

Most golfers who slice spend a lifetime trying to fix their clubface angle or swing path, when the culprit is often their left arm. If your left arm bends and breaks down through impact, the elbow will fold and move away from the side of your body, forming the dreaded “chicken wing.”

To release the clubhead properly and hit a draw, your lead elbow must stay close to and move in unison with your body. Do this properly and your elbow will point

down—not out—after impact, and your right forearm will roll over your left, squaring the clubface. To ingrain this move, tuck the sleeve of your shirt under your left arm at address and make several slow-motion practice swings, trapping the sleeve between your arm and your body. Maintain this feeling on the course and you’ll start to see that chicken wing—and your banana ball—disappear once and for all.

If your left elbow tends to move away from your body at impact—creating the dreaded “chicken wing”—tuck your left sleeve under your arm and keep it there as you swing.

POWER HITTER

You hit the ball a long way, but your game needs control and consistency.

MAKE SHORT WORK OF SHORT SHOTS

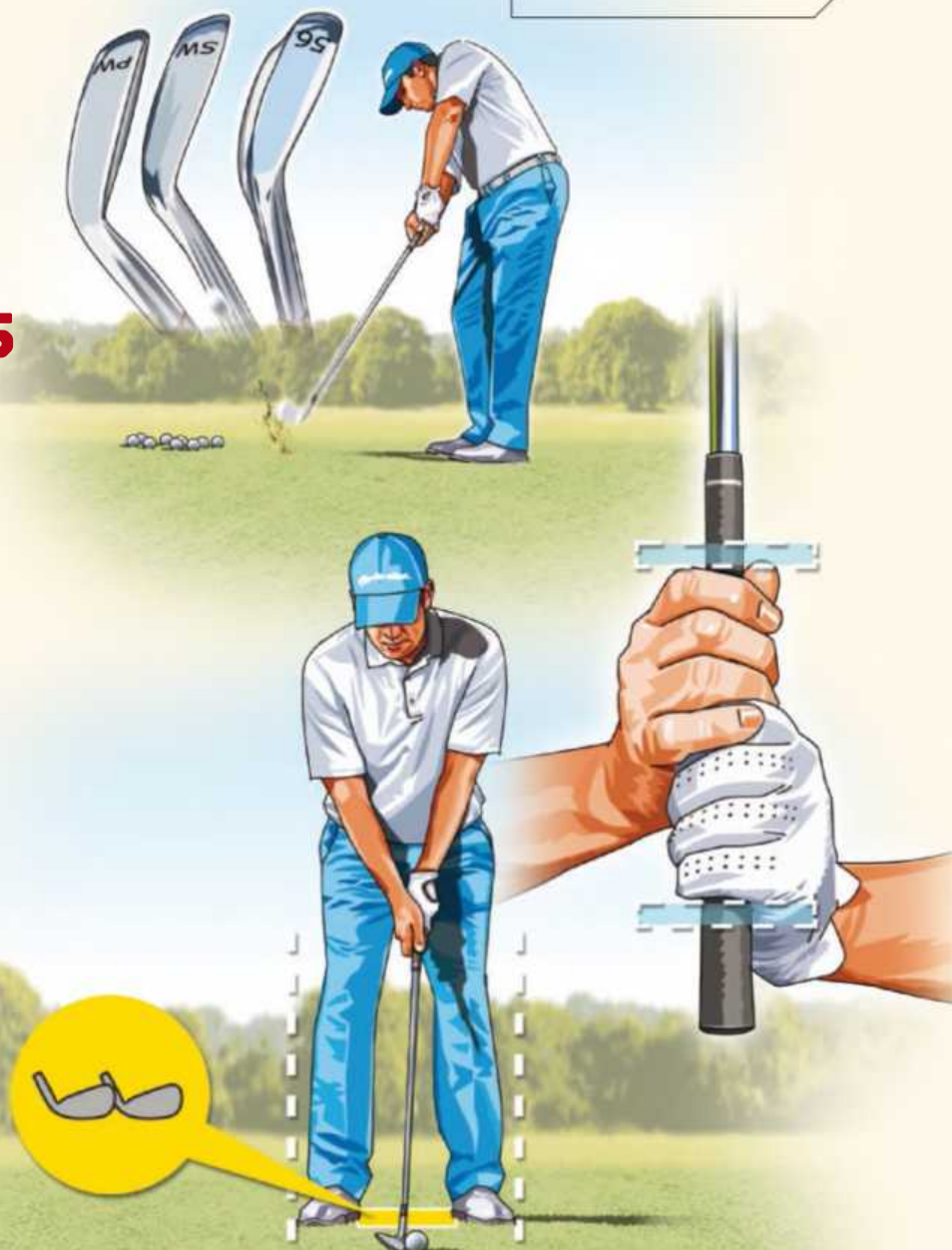
Welcome to no-man's-land, that treacherous distance between 40 and 100 yards from the green. If you have no idea which wedge you should hit or how hard you should swing, take heart. This system removes the guesswork, so you can easily dial in different yardages without changing the length of your swing or your preferred club. All you need are some setup adjustments.

First, hit 10 balls with every wedge in your bag to get an idea of how far you hit each club with a full swing. Then experiment with one or more of the following setup tweaks until you get the right distance. You may need to mix and match the adjustments to subtract the necessary yardage; the key is to find a combination that feels right and gives you consistent results.

TO SUBTRACT 5 YARDS

To start, narrow your stance by two clubhead widths, keeping the ball roughly centered between your heels. This restricts the length of your backswing and reduces your clubhead speed. If that doesn't feel comfortable, drop your hands to the middle of the grip, which effectively shortens the club. These tricky pitches are as much about feel as technique, so experiment—try one of the above moves, or combine the two in a way that works for you.

Wedges hit from inside 100 yards can be daunting. Don't sweat it. The proper adjustments to your stance and grip will make you automatic from no-man's-land.



Here's an easy way to take five yards off a full wedge shot. Narrow your stance by two clubhead widths and choke halfway down the grip. Or blend these two adjustments until your swing carries the ball the proper distance.

To dial down your full-swing yardage further, bring your feet closer together and choke down to the metal. You can also pull your left foot back at address.

TO SUBTRACT 10 YARDS

Again, try one of the following two tweaks, or use them in tandem. Narrow your stance by three clubhead widths, keeping the ball roughly centered between your heels. If that isn't enough, drop your hands farther down the grip, so that your bottom hand nearly touches the metal portion of the shaft. Another option: Move your left foot back so that the big toe is even with your right heel. That tweak alone should kill 10 yards.



STRAIGHT HITTER

You keep the ball in play, but a lack of distance puts pressure on your game.

3 KEYS TO EASY POWER

When you watch the guys on Tour routinely blast it 300-plus yards off the tee, you have to wonder: How do they make it look so easy? One key is that, unlike most recreational golfers, the pros don't go after it full force. Swinging out of their shoes disrupts their timing and rhythm and leads to mis-hits. To achieve such (seemingly) effortless power, try these three moves, which will help you launch it by your friends without looking like you're even trying.

Turn your shoulders back while keeping your hips still—your shoulders do the work and your arms just follow along.



BACKSWING

MORE SHOULDERS, LESS ARMS

From a wide, stable base, swing the clubhead back low and slow to the ground, turning your shoulders away from the target while keeping your hips still. You should feel some pressure on the inside of your right leg as the clubhead swings away from the ball on a very wide arc. Try to make a big shoulder turn and a small arm turn as you reach the top, stretching your hands as far away from your head as possible.



DOWNSWING

FIRM UP YOUR CORE

You've stored all that torque and energy on the backswing. Now comes the fun part: Turn it loose! The key? As your body unwinds around your spine in the downswing, keep the posture that you had at address. This is called maintaining your spine angle, aka, maintaining a stable core—and it's the most efficient way to deliver a powerful, effortless strike. For a more stable posture, suck in your gut before you swing and keep it engaged throughout your motion. This activates your core and lets your body unwind naturally while your arms swing freely.

Good news: Sucking in that gut will help you look slimmer *and* hit it farther. Maintaining tense stomach muscles during the downswing stabilizes your core through impact. The result? More clubhead speed and longer



FINISH

FOLLOW-THROUGH ON THE LEFT

At your swing's completion, almost all of your weight should be over your left leg, your eyes should look at the target, and your left leg should be straight. These are all indications that you've fully rotated around your spine. Most important is that you feel balanced. If you can hold your finish until your ball lands, then you've swung within yourself—and nothing looks more effortless than that.

At the end of a powerful, balanced swing, most of your weight should be on your left side, your left leg should be straight, and you should be able to hold your follow-through posture until the ball lands.

**LOW
HANDICAPPER**

You play well
but want to shave
those last few
strokes off
your handicap.

HAVE A BLAST ON ONE FOOT

Your approach finds the greenside bunker. No biggie—until you realize that the ball has drawn a dastardly downhill lie and is nestled near the back lip, and there's no way to take your regular stance. What now? Easy. Turn a tough downhill lie into a basic bunker shot that you can pull off every time—and give yourself a chance to get up and down.

Hitting a ball that's tucked in close to the back lip of a bunker is never easy, especially if you can't take a normal stance. But with a few adjustments, you can actually make that awkward stance work for you.



STEP ONE

DROP YOUR RIGHT FOOT BACK

Step into the sand with both feet, keeping your left heel even with the ball. Flare your left foot out for extra balance, then move your right foot out of the bunker and onto the hill just behind you. Get your trailing foot far enough up the hill to keep your hips and shoulders even with the slope of the bunker. Your right shoulder should be a few degrees higher than your left.

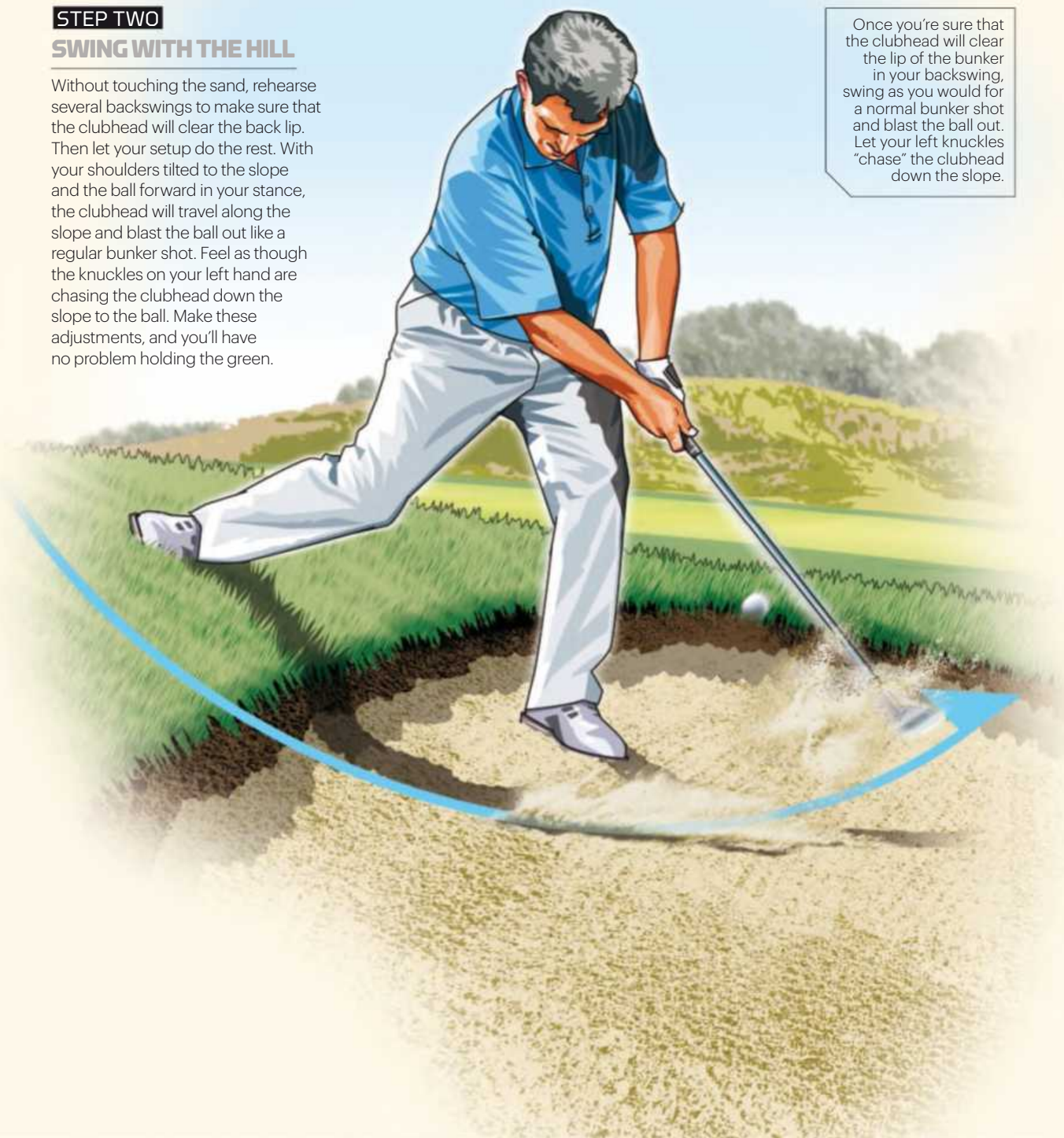
How can you turn a scary lie into a simpler shot? Place your back foot outside the bunker and above your front foot, which lets you swing down the slope for clean contact.

STEP TWO

SWING WITH THE HILL

Without touching the sand, rehearse several backswings to make sure that the clubhead will clear the back lip. Then let your setup do the rest. With your shoulders tilted to the slope and the ball forward in your stance, the clubhead will travel along the slope and blast the ball out like a regular bunker shot. Feel as though the knuckles on your left hand are chasing the clubhead down the slope to the ball. Make these adjustments, and you'll have no problem holding the green.

Once you're sure that the clubhead will clear the lip of the bunker in your backswing, swing as you would for a normal bunker shot and blast the ball out. Let your left knuckles "chase" the clubhead down the slope.



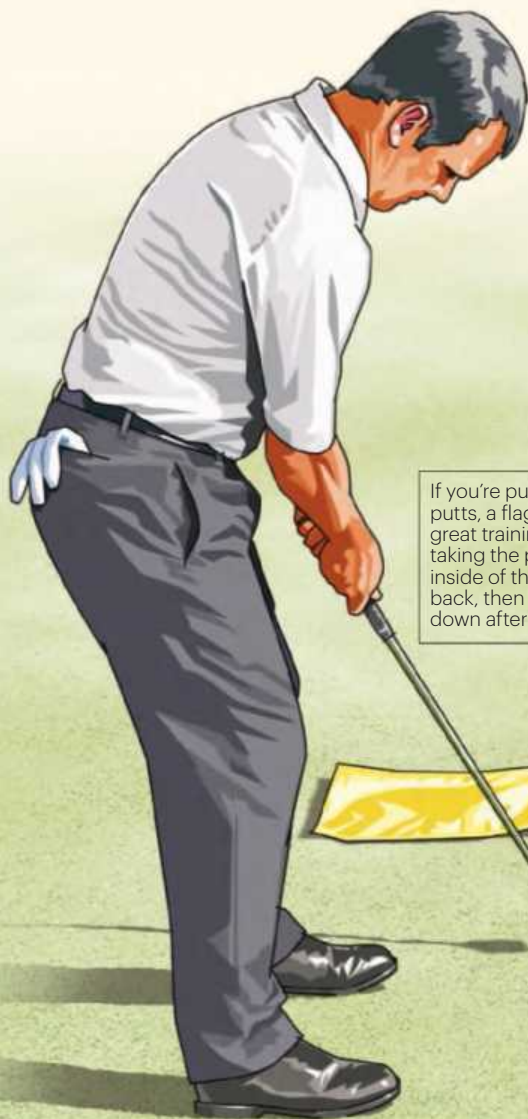
**SENIOR
PLAYER**

You've lost some flexibility and power, but you still know how to score.

FLAG DOWN THOSE PULLED PUTTS

You've checked your aim (all good) and your head stays rock steady, but you still miss a lot of putts left. Odds are, your stroke is the problem. It may feel nice and square, but it's easier than you think to develop an out-to-in stroke path, which leads to pulled putts. Here's a quick way to groove the correct straight back, straight-through motion.

Lay a flagstick on the ground and hover the putterhead over it so the putterface is square to the pole. Make several practice strokes. Swing the head slightly to the inside going back, so that the toe section hangs over the stick, then return it straight down the pole on the through-stroke. Do this drill every time you practice and "the lefts" will soon be left behind.



If you're pulling a lot of putts, a flagstick makes a great training device. Practice taking the putterhead to the inside of the pole on the way back, then straight back down after impact.





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Through Thick and Thins

» **BADDECK, NOVA SCOTIA,
CANADA, 28 OCTOBER 2015**

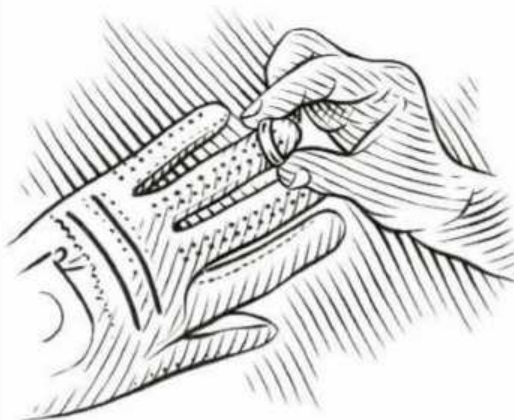
The missus and I, married 25 years ago today, spent the first summer of our married life in Scotland. For our silver anniversary we came here, to New Scotland, where the village signs are in English and Scottish Gaelic. There were days in that summer of '91 that I played 36—in St. Andrews, in Gullane, in Machrihanish. Christine was not then or now a regular golfer, but she has had a general tolerance, and even enthusiasm, for my golf. During our courtship, she would clip *New York Times* game stories by Gordon S. White Jr.—the third round at Akron, that sort of thing. Younglove.

We all know how it goes. The other day I told Christine that I had a game at Pine Valley. Golf there is an all-day affair. “Great,” she said. Great is a funny word. Tone tells all. But by Jimmy Fallon and lights out, she had had a good day, and I had, too. *All’s well that ends well*. If you’re lucky, you have a spouse who understands that the fever must be fed. I have found it runs at different temperatures in different seasons, and in different years.

Christine is our family travel agent, and she timed our trip here so I could play Cabot Links, in Inverness, before the holes got filled for winter. I was the last man out on the last day of the season. The afternoon was cold and nasty—beautiful, in its way. It’s a fine and unpretentious course, lodged between the sea and the road, as so many of the originals are, back in the old country. I’ll cite just two here, the Old Course and North Berwick, which Christine walked with me in our first married summer. We have books about Scotland at home with wildflowers pressed between the pages that she plucked along the way.

At Cabot, heavy metal rings at the bottoms of the cups hold the flagsticks in place. You know what the Scots say:

If you’re lucky,
you have a spouse
who understands:
The game is a fever
that must be fed.



Nae wind, nae golf. While I played it as a singleton through a gray breeze, Christine drove the Cabot Trail. No birdies, no moose. Still, a good time.

The day after our wedding, my maroon Dodge Omni died en route to the airport. We got to JFK about a half-hour before our flight, and airport security allowed me to bring my golf bag onto the plane like it was a backpack. We went to the island of Hispaniola, which is the Dominican Republic on one side and Haiti on the other. We were in Haiti on All Saints’ Day, a voodoo holy day. My first round as a married man came at the Teeth of the Dog course at Casa de Campo, in the Dominican. On the first hole, I hit driver on the screws, pured an 8-iron and was left with an uphill grainy eight-footer that I saw one way and my caddie another. I deferred to his expertise and was one under through one. *And the gallery goes wild!*

Christine celebrated the excellent start, anyway. Later, we bought black-market gasoline from the caddie, in one-liter Evian bottles. We’ve been traveling ever since.

Our summer together in Scotland came after my brief stint working as a caddie on the European Tour. I have made more great friendships from that trip and its aftermath (a slender book) than I deserve. In Dornoch, a club caddie, Sandy Matheson, invited Christine and me to join him and his wife for a home-cooked dinner. Poached salmon and boiled potatoes, scotch for dessert. I am typing this in a bay-front cottage owned by friends. In the local grocery store yesterday, we looked for fresh fish but found only frozen smoked salmon, which Christine folded into her pesto sauce, served last night on whole-wheat penne, topped with crushed cherry tomatoes. The wine was from Australia. (How

great is this shrinking world?) We’ve had scores of meals over the years with friends where the menfolk started and ended the evening on the game while the ladies addressed lesser matters, like child rearing.

Twenty-five years ago (or near enough), Christine and I took an all-night caddie bus to get from a tournament in Tarragona, in Spain, to the next one, in Póvoa de Varzim, in Portugal, on the spectacular links course there. There was nearly a riot when the on-bus entertainment turned out to be *Herbie Rides Again*, in Spanish. We’ve been driving the hills of Nova Scotia in a four-door white Chevy rented from Budget. You can hear Canadian French on the car radio.

Last night we played fireside Scrabble while listening to a Hoagy Carmichael CD found on the bookshelf. When I made P-U-R-E-D, Christine started to challenge it, but I used it in a sentence, and my bride of 25 years accepted the word, as she has accepted me.

—MICHAEL BAMBERGER



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Ford MUSTANG



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